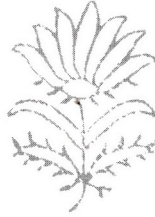




❀ Śrī Bhaktamāla ❀

*Compiled by Śrī Nābhā Gosvāmī
With commentary by Śrī Priyādāsa*



Śrī Bhaktamāla

Compiled by Śrī Nābhā Gosvāmī
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Translated by Bhumipati Dāsa
Edited by Purnāprajña Dāsa



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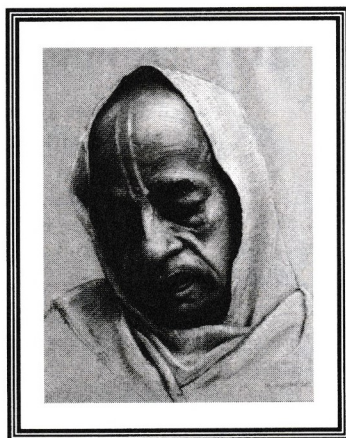
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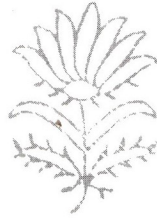
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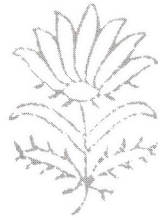
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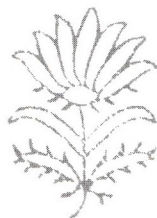


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Śrī Bhaktamāla

Śrī Bhaktamāla is well-known even among common people as a necklace consisting of beads that are devotees. It is offered to the Supreme Lord for His pleasure. Śrī Bhaktamāla contains narrations of devotees in whose hearts the Lord eternally enjoys pastimes. These devotees also reside in the Lord's heart, relishing pastimes. Even a barren heart will blossom by hearing the narrations contained in this book. This is not merely a divine literature, but a social experiment as well, because its purpose is to string beads of different origins onto a single thread.

Simply by chanting, reading, or hearing the contents of this book, one will become like one of the beads on this string. The beads, the head bead, the act of stringing the beads, and the thread are four different objects, but when strung, they become one. The devotee, devotional service, the Supreme Lord, and the spiritual master—by worshiping any one of these with faith and determination, one easily avails of the other three.

There was conflict due to disagreements between the different *sampradāyas* at the time Bhaktamāla was compiled. Everyone thought their worshipable Deity, their literatures, their ācāryas, and their followers to be the best and therefore all the others inferior. For this reason the practice of real religion had suffered, and is still suffering.

In such a time of crisis, Śrīmad Agvadevācārya instructed Śrī Nābhā about the unalloyed conclusion that by worshiping the devotees of the Supreme Lord and by following the orders of a bonafide spiritual master, one's goal of life is easily achieved. This conclusion is not sectarian or biased because it establishes the absolute and transcendental position of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His pleenary portions, His devotees, His devotional service, and His representatives.

One can philosophically understand that Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, and Nārāyaṇa are non-different, although Kṛṣṇa's position as the original Supreme Personality of Godhead

is confirmed in the beginning of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. The innumerable demigods are devotees of the Supreme Lord, and are thus to be respected. By disregarding the Supreme Lord and His devotees, it is impossible to render pure devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

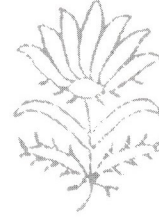
Attachment to the lotus feet of the devotees strengthens one's attachment for the Lord. The glories of the Supreme Lord and His devotees are unlimited. This book will gradually bring the readers closer to their worshipable Lord. The wonderful glories of the devotees of different *sampradāyas* are described in this book.

Just as the Supreme Lord is eternal, so His devotees are also eternal. Just as the narrations of the Supreme Lord's pastimes are eternal, so the narrations concerning the lives of His devotees are also eternal. No pastime of the Supreme Lord is enacted without the association of His devotees.

Prior to Śrī Bhaktamāla, the characteristics of the devotees were described in the *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, and historical literatures. The spiritual master of Śrī Nābhā, who was known as Śrīmad Agradevācārya, had ordered Nābhā (Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dāsa), around 1666, to compile Śrī Bhaktamāla. Compiled one hundred years thereafter, in 1766, Śrī Priyādāsa's commentary in poetry form is as important as the original book, Bhaktamāla. According to modern scholars, without Priyādāsa's commentary, the reading of Śrī Bhaktamāla is incomplete.

From the Maṅgalacaraṇa, it appears that

Priyādāsa belonged to the Śrī Mādhva Gauḍesvara *sampradāya*. His lineage is: Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprahu, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Śrīnivāsācārya, Śrī Manohara dāsa, and Śrī Priyādāsa.



❀ Verse 1 ❀

Invocation by Śrī Priyādāsa

One day, as I was meditating on the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu and my spiritual master, Śrī Manohara Dāsa, and chanting the holy names of the Lord, Śrī Nābhā appeared to me and gave me an instruction which I took upon my head. The instruction was "write an elaborate commentary on Śrī Bhaktamāla in poetry form. It should be very pleasing to everyone and should be propagated throughout the world." After saying this, he disappeared.

I was struck with wonder and began to contemplate: "I know my limitations and am sure that I am totally incapable of writing a commentary, but I have heard from Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (1.2.2) that Śrī Śūkadeva Gosvāmī entered trees and personally spoke. In the same way, Śrī Nābhā may enter my materially infected mind and help me present this commentary.

❀ Verse 2 ❀

I have composed my commentary in such a way as to give immense pleasure to the readers and hearers. Only the genuine facts have been mentioned, and the fault of repetition has been avoided. The nectarean syllables, accompanied by literary ornaments, have manifested a stream of bliss. It is not proper to praise one's own work, but this commentary has been personally dictated by Śrī Nābhā and so I have boldly presented it. If persons with dry hearts constantly hear this commentary, their hearts will melt, and if persons with soft hearts repeatedly hear this commentary, they will relish its nectar more and more. Therefore this commentary has been named *Bhakti-rasa-bodhinī*, for it will give the reader a proper understanding of the mellows of devotional service.

❀ Verse 3 ❀

Let us decorate devotional service personified—Śrīmatī Bhakti-devī—by cleansing her devotional body with the fragrant oil of faith and then applying the scented oil of hearing the topics of the Supreme Lord on her body. This will remove all the dirt of false ego. One should then bathe her with the water of remembrance, and wipe her body with the towel of compassion. She should then be dressed in the garment of humility, and thereafter, one should apply the fragrant cosmetics of firm determination. One should then adorn

her with the various ornaments of chanting the holy names. One should then decorate her ears with the earrings of service to the devotees, and her nose with the beautiful nosering of worshipping the Lord within the mind. One should then adorn her eyes with the black ointment of the association of devotees.

One who decorates goddess Bhakti-devī in this way and offers her the betel nut of desire for uninterrupted service certainly attains the loving service of Their Lordships. This is the verdict of all saintly persons and scriptures.

❀ Verse 4 ❀

In this *Rasa-bodhinī* commentary, the science of all the five transcendental *rasas*, or mellows, is elaborately described. The five *rasas* are *śānta*, *dāsyā*, *sakhyā*, *vātsalyā*, and *mādhuryā*. When the readers and listeners carefully study their characteristics, they will be struck with wonder. Those dry and hard-hearted people who never shed tears of ecstatic love of God, and the hairs of whose bodies never stand on end, will also be submerged in the ocean of loving devotional service. So long as they remain indifferent to this literature, they will be bereft of pure devotional service, but if they hear it with attention, their hearts will melt and become filled with the mellows of transcendental love.

❁ Verse 5 ❁

The five *rasas* are like a garland of flowers having five colors. This *vaijayanti* garland has been beautiful prepared by a *sakhī* named Nābhā in order to decorate her beloved Lord. As soon as the Lord saw the garland, He became attracted. He then placed the garland on His chest and never removed it. Just see the good fortune of that garland! It hung down to His lotus feet, as if being bent with the burden of the beauty of devotional service. One who has the *darśana* of Lord Kṛṣṇa wearing the five-colored garland of Bhaktamāla conquers the Lord and is conquered by Him.

❁ Verse 6 ❁

When the creeper of devotional service in the heart of a practitioner is immature, there is every danger of its being harmed. Therefore a devotee should construct a fence of discrimination around it, and then water it with the association of devotees. In this way the tree will continue to develop its branches and sub-branches, reaching toward the coverings of the universe. When the living entities afflicted by the three-fold material miseries come under the shade of this devotional tree in the form of hearing and chanting in the association of devotees, which is planted in the hearts of saintly persons, they will become free from all material pangs. If properly nourished and cared for, the tree which once was afraid

of a goat will not be harmed even by giant elephants.

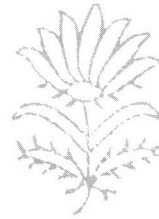
❁ Verse 7 ❁

The author has meticulously described the wonderful characteristics of numerous devotees, according to their respective positions. Just as a jewel wrapped in fine cloth naturally displays its brightness, so the words of these poems reveal the glories of the devotees. The qualities and glories of the devotees are unlimited, but the author, by the mercy of his spiritual master and the devotees, has described them so wonderfully and concisely that they reveal their actual positions. This is the special characteristic of an erudite poet. The bee-like devotees in the assembly of readers are seen dancing in ecstasy while relishing this nectar, as if they are hovering over fragrant flowers of exalted devotees possessing wonderful characters. This is indeed delightful poetry. I had heard the word *agara* before, which is the name of my spiritual master, Śrī Agaradeva, but I have now realized that *agara* is truly a fragrant tree from which the fragrance of Nābhā has been extracted, and that sweet aroma is this Bhaktamāla.

❁ Verse 8 ❁

Even for persons who are absolutely devoted, even for those who sing about the Lord's qualities throughout the day

and night, even for those who are able to counteract the material miseries, even for those whose hearts are content simply by chanting the holy names of the Lord and by meditating on His transcendental form, even for those who understand the actual position of Lord Hari and His devotees and thus sincerely serve them, and even for those who remain aloof from material contamination and accept love of God as their ultimate goal of life, the cultivation of devotional service is very difficult. Who can practice devotional service, and how can it be practiced? It is difficult to understand the essential characteristics of pure devotional service. While attempting to do so, the mind becomes agitated and stops functioning. Even if one is adorned with marks of *tilaka* and wears neck beads, it is impossible for him to understand the science of devotional service without reading, hearing, or remembering Bhaktamāla.



❀ Invocation by Śrī Nābhā ❀

❀ Text 1 ❀

The devotee of the Supreme Lord, devotional service to the Supreme Lord, and the spiritual master who understands the science of the Supreme Lord and directs us towards Him are actually one, although they appear to be three. By offering obeisances unto their lotus feet, all of one's impediments are vanquished.

(In the first eight verses, the commentator has written his own introduction and invocation, and from here on, he writes his commentary on the original *Bhaktamāla*.)

A genuine devotee is he who displays non-duplicious behavior towards the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the spiritual master, and the devotees of the Lord, and who remains firmly fixed in devotional service in all circumstances without deviation. The actual symptom of one's being absorbed in the mellows of devotional service is that as soon as one chants the beautiful holy names of the Lord, tears of ecstasy begin to flow from his eyes. The Supreme Personality of

Godhead is always eager for, and attentive to, the loving exchanges of His devotees, ignoring His position as God, just as Śrī Kṛṣṇa did with the Pāṇdavas during the Rājasya sacrifice. The unique position of the spiritual master is depicted in *Bhaktamāla* in connection with the character of Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa, who kept body and soul together simply by drinking milk.

❁ Texts 2-4 ❁

It is understood from the invocation that there is nothing superior to glorification of the characteristics of the devotees for invoking auspiciousness. Truthfully, only the devotees of the Lord are capable of properly glorifying the transcendental qualities of pure devotees. The *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, and historical works; as well as saintly persons; have concluded that the true object of worship is the Supreme Lord, Hari, and His devotees. My spiritual master, Śrī Agradeva, ordered me to sing the glories of the pure devotees, because other than this, there is no practical method for crossing beyond the ocean of material existence.

❁ Commentary ❁

Once, as Śrī Agradeva Svami was rendering service to the Lord within his mind and Śrī Nābhā was fanning him with a soft and beautiful fan, another disciple of Śrī

Agradeva was on a sea voyage and his ship became entangled in a whirlpool. The captain of the ship lost all hope while that disciple began remembering his spiritual master, Śrī Agradeva. As a result, Śrī Agradeva's attention was diverted from the sublime form of his beloved Lord. Realizing the disturbance to his spiritual master's mental service, Śrī Nābhā blew the ship away from danger with the fan and humbly appealed to his preceptor: "O lord, now that the ship is out of danger and has sailed far away, kindly resume your excellent service." At this, Śrī Agradeva opened his eyes. Looking at his spiritual master, Śrī Nābhā folded his hands and said, "I am your humble servant whom you have nourished with *prasāsa* since childhood."

Hearing Śrī Nābhā's words, Śrī Agradeva was struck with wonder as he began to contemplate, "How was he able to gain entry into my *mānasī-sevā*? And how did he save the ship from here?"

Śrī Agradeva soon realized with great happiness that everything was possible by rendering service to the devotees and honoring the remnants of their food. Śrī Agradeva then instructed, "You have been blessed by the devotees. You should dedicate your life to describing the wonderful qualities, moods, and characteristics of the devotees."

Having received this instruction, Śrī Nābhā folded his hands and said, "O my spiritual master, I may be able to glorify the characteristics of Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa,

but I will not be able to find the limit of the devotees' exalted qualities because their hearts are very grave so that I am unable to grasp their devotional sentiments."

In response, Śrī Agradeva assured Śrī Nābhā, saying, "Know for certain that the devotees, as well as the Supreme Lord who had given you access to my *mānasi-sevā* and had shown you the ship at sea, will manifest in your heart and thus reveal everything to you."

Śrī Nābhā was born in the celebrated line of Hanumān, and he was born blind. When he was only five years old, his mother left him in a forest because of poverty. It was a big calamity for both the mother and son. You can only imagine the condition of both. Just after the child was abandoned, two great personalities, Śrī Kīlhādeva and Śrī Agradeva, happened to pass that way by the arrangement of Providence. Seeing young Nābhā in that condition, they inquired from him and Nābhā answered as best he could. Both exalted souls were perfected devotees. They took some water from their water pots and sprinkled it on Nābhā's eyes. Śrī Nābhā's eyes immediately opened, and when he saw the two saintly persons standing before him, his happiness knew no bounds.

Śrī Nābhā fell at the lotus feet of the two great souls and offered them his obeisances, his eyes filled with tears of love. The two exalted personalities took Śrī Nābhā with them, and being advised by Śrī Kīlhādeva, Śrī Agradeva gave the young boy initiation into the chanting of the *mantras* of Lord Rāma.

The custom of serving saintly persons at the Galtā āśrama (near Jaipur) is very well known and so there is always a host of devotees present there. Understanding the importance of serving devotees, and knowing that by serving devotees, his disciple would attain perfection so that he would deliver others in the future, Śrī Agradeva engaged Śrī Nābhā in that way. By receiving the water that had washed the devotees' lotus feet, and receiving the remnants of their food, Śrī Nābhā developed great faith and devotion in such service. As he continued to engage in the devotional service of the Lord, his heart became filled with unprecedented transcendental bliss. No one could measure the depth of the ever-increasing ecstasy he experienced while serving the Supreme Lord and His devotees. Following in the footsteps of his spiritual master, who was a personification of devotional service, he utilized his beautiful words in glorifying the devotees' sublime characteristics.

❀ Text 5 ❀

The twenty-four incarnations of the Supreme Personality of Godhead

All glories to the Supreme Lord, who assumed the form of a fish. All glories to the Supreme Lord, who appeared as the Boar Incarnation. All glories to the Supreme Lord, who appeared in the form of a tortoise. All glories to the Supreme Lord, who appeared as the half-man half-

lion incarnation. All glories to the Supreme Lord, who appeared as a dwarf *brāhmaṇa* incarnation in the sacrificial arena of Bali Mahārāja. All glories to the Supreme Lord known as Śrī Paraśurāma. All glories to the Supreme Lord Śrī Rāmacandra, who is the crest jewel of the Raghu dynasty. All glories to the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the master of the Yadu dynasty and whose pastimes purify the entire world. All glories to the Supreme Lord Buddha, Lord Kalki, Vyāsadeva, Pṛthu; and Śrī Hari, the savior of elephant Gajendra. All glories to the Supreme Lord, who appeared as Haṁsa. All glories to the Supreme Lord, who assumes different forms during the reigns of the fourteen Manus. All glories to the Supreme Lord, Yajña, who is the protector of Sāyambhūva Manu. All glories to the Supreme Lord, Ṛṣabhadeva. All glories to the Supreme Lord, Hayagriva. All glories to the Supreme Lord, who gave benedictions to Dhruva Mahārāja. All glories to the Supreme Lord, Dhanvantari. All glories to the Supreme Lord, Nara and Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of Badarīnātha. All glories to Śrī Dattātreya, and all glories to Śrī Kapiladeva. All glories to Śrī Sanaka, Śrī Sananda, Śrī Sanātana and Śrī Sanat-kumāra. May all of these transcendental personalities, whose glories purify the entire world, be merciful to me. Kindly reveal Your sublime pastimes within my heart. O my spiritual master, Śrī Agradeva, as well as the above-mentioned twenty-four incarnations, kindly bestow your mercy upon me.



❀ Śrī Matsya avatāra ❀

First appearance

When Lord Brahmā was about to go to sleep, the *Vedas* emerged from his mouth. The demon Hayagrīva, who was nearby, quickly came and stole them. Thereafter, the entire universe became submerged in water during the partial annihilation called Brahmā-pralaya. Lord Hari understood the ill intentions of the demon and so to deliver and protect the *Vedas*, He assumed the form of a fish.

There lived a saintly devotee king named Satyavrata in South India. He sometimes performed austerities by simply subsisting upon water. He has now become Vaivasvata Manu in the present *mahā-kalpa*.

One day, as he was offering oblations of water in the Kṛtamālā River, a tiny fish came onto the palm of his hand. The king put the fish back in the water. The tiny fish then prayed to the king, “If you do not protect me then the bigger aquatics will eat me. Therefore, please give me protection.”

Out of compassion, the king took the small fish and kept it in his water pot. However, the fish began to expand so rapidly that the water pot soon became too small. The king put the fish in a big pitcher, but within two hours the fish expanded to three cubits in length. The king then put the fish in a lake. Very soon, the fish assumed a gigantic form.

Thereafter, the king put the fish into larger and larger reservoirs of water, but each time the fish grew too big. Finally the king put the fish into the ocean. Still, the fish pleaded, “O King! Do not leave me here. Kindly protect me.”

The King asked, “Who are You who have appeared in the form of a fish just to bewilder me? Within one day you have expanded Yourself to become eight hundred miles in length so that you covered an extensive lake. I think that You must be the omnipotent, indestructible Lord Hari, the Supersoul of all living beings. Why have you accepted this form?”

The Supreme Lord said, “On the seventh day from today, the three worlds will be submerged into the waters of devastation. At that time, by My arrangement, a large boat will appear before you. Board that boat with the subtle bodies of all living entities within the three worlds, along with the seven sages and all kinds of medicinal herbs and seeds. For as long as Brahmā remains asleep during his night, I will sport with your boat in the waters of devastation. At that time I will answer all of your questions.”

Saying this, the Matsya incarnation disappeared from view. Thereafter, when the time for the devastation of the universe arrived, everything happened just as the Lord had predicted. When the Fish incarnation appeared, His body shone brightly like molten gold, on His head was a horn, and the length of His body was eight million miles. The boat also appeared, and it

was fastened to the Fish incarnation’s horn, using the serpent Vāsuki as a rope. King Satyavrata offered suitable prayers to the Supreme Lord. Being pleased by his prayers, the Lord instructed him regarding the confidential mystery of His transcendental form, and the science of self-realization. This is elaborately described in the *Matsya Purāṇa*. When Lord Brahmā awoke from his sleep, the Supreme Lord killed the demon Hayagrīva and returned the *Vedas* to him. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8th Canto 24th Chapter)



❀ Śrī Matsya avatāra ❀

Second appearance

The Ocean personified had a son named Śaṅkha. He defeated the demigods in battle, driving them away from the heavenly planets, and then took charge of their kingdom. The demigods left in fear and hid themselves in the caves of Mount Sumeru. By doing so, they did not come under the control of their enemy.

The demon, Śaṅkha, thought that the demigods got their mystic powers by chanting the Vedic *mantras* and so he decided to forcibly take control of the *Vedas*. Thus it came to be that the demon Śaṅkha stole the *Vedas*. Lord Brahmā, as the leader of the demigods, approached the Supreme Lord on Prabodhinī Ekādaśī during the month of Kārttika. After hearing of the

demigods' plight, the Supreme Lord gave assurances to Brahmā and then took the form of a fish and fell from the sky into to the palm of sage Kaśyapa's hand as he was residing in the Vindhya Mountains.

Out of compassion, the sage first kept the fish in his water pot. Then he put Him in a well, a lake, a river, and many other reservoirs of water before finally putting Him into the ocean. Even in the ocean, the fish expanded to an incredibly gigantic size. Thereafter, the Supreme Lord in the form of a fish killed the demon Śaṅkhāsura and dragged him to the forest of Badrikāśrama. There the Lord summoned all the sages and ordered them to go and search for the *Vedas* within the water. Being ordered by the Lord, the sages soon delivered all the Vedic *mantras*, along with all varieties of seeds. Then all of the sages, headed by Brahmā, offered the *Vedas* to the Supreme Lord. (This narration is found in the *Padma Purāṇa*)



❁ Matsya avatāra Third appearance ❁

Sage Kaśyapa's wife, Diti, gave birth to many demons, including Makara, Hayagrīva, Hiraṇyākṣa, Hiraṇyakaśipu, Jambhu, and Maya. The demon Makara went to Brahmāloka, and after bewildering the grandsire, he stole the *Vedas*. Along with the *Vedas*, he entered the ocean so that the entire universe became bereft of religious principles. Thereafter, in response to the

appeal of Brahmā, the Supreme Lord took the form of a fish and entered the ocean. He tore apart the demon Makara with His chin and thus delivered the *Vedas* with all of their branches and sub-branches to Brahmā. (The narration is found in the *Padma Purāṇa*)

This Matsya avatāra appeared at Puṣpabhadra in Satya-yuga on the morning of the eleventh day of the waxing moon in the month of Āṣāḍha. Matsya avatāra had also appeared to deliver Vaivasvata Manu, as described in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.15.



❁ Ś r i V a r ā h a a v a t ā r a ❁

Being ordered by Lord Brahmā to carry out the task of creation, Svāyambhuva Manu saw that the earth had become submerged in the waters of devastation. He prayed to Brahmā that the grandsire should somehow or other deliver the earth so that he could proceed with the work of creation.

Understanding that the earth had sunk down to the Rasātala planet, Brahmā took shelter of Lord Hari, the possessor of all potencies. Just then, a tiny boar measuring the size of a thumb appeared from Brahmā's nostril, and within a moment He expanded to become gigantic like a great mountain. The Boar incarnation of the Lord began roaring like the king of elephants.

Lord Varāha first jumped high into the sky. His body appeared to be very taut and



❀ Śrī Kūrma avatāra ❀

strong, it had hairs as hard as iron, and a glaring effulgence emanated from His eyes. His jaws were very strong and harsh in appearance.

Thereafter, the Lord, whose transcendental body was as hard as a thunderbolt, dove into the water. He swiftly plummeted to the depths of the ocean while piercing the water with His hooves, which were as sharp as arrows. Far beneath the surface, the Lord came to Rasātala, where He saw the earth inhabited by all kinds of living entities. Lord Varāha picked up the earth with His task and emerged from the water.

As Lord Varāha came out of the water, a very powerful demon named Hiraṇyākṣa attacked Him with a club to stop His progress. However, the Supreme Lord effortlessly killed the demon. Holding the earth upon His white tusk, Lord Varāha victoriously emerged from the ocean. His complexion was blackish, like a *tamāla* tree.

All the demigods, headed by Brahmā, could understand the Boar Incarnation to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead and so they offered suitable prayers with folded hands. At the time of annihilation, all the ingredients for sacrifice were merged into the transcendental body of the Supreme Lord. At the time of creation, this form of Yajña-varāha manifested all those ingredients for sacrifice from His transcendental body.

Lord Varāhadeva appeared at noon on the fifth day of the waxing moon in the month of Bhādra at Haridvāra in the Satya-yuga.

When the demigods, despite being considered immortal, began dying from the onslaught of the sharp weapons of the demons in a great battle, they could not regain their strength and regroup. The inhabitants of the three worlds had become bereft of all opulence due to sage Durvāsa's curse. The King of heaven, Indra, went to Lord Brahmā and informed him of their condition. Then Brahmā, along with the other chief demigods, approached the unconquerable Supreme Lord and offered prayers to Him.

In response, the Supreme Lord advised the demigods to make peace with the demons so that together they could churn the ocean of milk. He said, "You should use Mount Mandara as a churning rod and the serpent Vāsukī as the rope. In the course of churning the milk ocean, there will first appear deadly poison, but you should not be anxious. Many types of jewels will appear, but you should not hanker after possessing them. Finally, nectar will emerge, but don't worry, for I will tactfully hand it over to you."

The demigods went to the King of the demons, Bali Mahārāja, and made peace with him. Thereafter, the demigods and demons uprooted Mount Mandara, but as they were carrying it to the ocean of milk, they became exhausted. At that time the Supreme Lord arrived before them. After placing Mount

Mandara on the back of Garuḍa, the Lord arrived at the seashore. The serpent Vāsuki agreed to become the churning rope, for he desired a share of the nectar.

When the demigods and demons began churning the ocean of milk, the mountain started sinking as there was nothing to support it. Both the demigods and demons were disappointed to see this. Realizing that this impediment was an act of Gaṇeśa, the Supreme Lord smilingly said, “One should worship Gaṇeśa at the beginning of every endeavor. Without his worship, nothing can be accomplished. Therefore let us worship Gaṇeśa.”

This was certainly a pastime of the Supreme Lord. The Lord is all-powerful and capable of doing anything, but still, at the commencement of any auspicious activity, it is one’s duty to worship Gaṇapati.

When the demigods and demons were thus engaged in worshiping Gaṇeśa, the Supreme Lord assumed a gigantic form of a tortoise, dove into the ocean, and placed Mount Madarā upon His one-hundred-thousand-vojana-wide back. Thereafter, the demigods and demons resumed vigorously churning the milk ocean. The churning of Mount Mandara relieved the itching sensation the Lord felt on His back.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead in His form of a tortoise held Mount Mandara, and in His form of Lord Viṣṇu, He and the demigods churned the ocean of milk, and yet He assumed still another form which pressed the mountain from its top so that it

would not fall into the ocean. The demigods and demons continued churning for a very long time, but nectar was not produced. The Supreme Lord then manifested a form possessing a thousand arms and personally began churning the ocean. It was a wonderful sight to see. The demigods, headed by Brahmā, Śiva, and the four Kumāras, glorified the Lord and showered flowers upon Him from the sky. The Ocean personified also joined in the glorification of the Lord.

Then a deadly poison was produced from the churning, and it began burning the three worlds. This poison was presented to Mahādeva, the worshipable lord of the demigods. Next, many jewels appeared from the ocean of milk. Next appeared a *surabhi* cow which was offered as a gift to the sages. A powerful horse named Uccaiḥśravā appeared, and it was taken by the demons. Later on, a gigantic elephant was produced and was given to the King of the demigods, Indra. There appeared a Kaustubha jewel, which the Supreme Lord personally accepted and placed around His neck. A desire tree appeared and went directly to the heavenly planets. Many celestial women appeared, and they also went to the heavenly planets of their own accord.

Goddess Laxmī next appeared, and although He was indifferent to Her, She accepted Lord Viṣṇu, who is endowed with all transcendental qualities, as Her Lord. Vāruṇī was produced and the demons gladly accepted her. There appeared a large bow,

but no one could even move it and so the Supreme Lord accepted it. The moon was produced from the churning and it was placed in outer space so that it could move about freely.

The Supreme Lord also accepted the divine conchshell that appeared in the course of the churning. Finally, Lord Dhanvantari appeared with a pitcher of nectar in His hands. The demons snatched the pot of nectar from His hands as the demigods watched with sheer disappointment. Thereafter, the Supreme Lord took the form of a female named Mohinī and, after bewildering the demons, offered the nectar to the demigods. A demon disguised as a demigod had sat between the Sun-god and the Moon-god so that he could drink nectar. As he was about to swallow the nectar, the Sun-god and Moon-god disclosed his true identity. The Supreme Lord quickly severed his head from his body with His Sudarśana *cakra*. However, since the demon had drunk a small portion of the nectar, he did not die even though his head had been severed, and so he was given a place among the planets.

So as to take revenge against the Sun-god and Moon-god, even today the planet Rāhu attacks them on full moon and new moon days. This attack is what people call an eclipse. The demigods were satisfied because they were able to drink the nectar. They were under the shelter of the Lord and so they naturally came out victorious in the battle against the demons which ensued.

Kūrma avatāra appeared in the morning

of the third day of the waning moon in the month of Āṣāḍa in Satya-yuga.



❀ Śrī Nṛsimha Avatāra ❀

When Lord Varāha killed Hiraṇyākṣa, his mother, Diti, his wife, Bhānumati, and his brother, Hiraṇyakaśipu, were highly aggrieved. The King of the demons, Hiraṇyakaśipu, pacified everyone, although he maintained a grudge against Lord Kṛṣṇa. The fire of revenge burned in his heart and so he decided to perform austerities so that he could rule the three worlds and become immortal.

For this purpose, Hiraṇyakaśipu went to a valley of Mount Mandara and began performing severe austerities. By the influence of his austerities, the demigods became disturbed. Finally, at the request of the demigods, Lord Brahmā appeared before the demon and asked him to accept a benediction.

Hiraṇyakaśipu said, “May I not be killed by any living entity created by you. May I not die inside or outside any dwelling, or during the day or at night, or by any weapons, or by any other creature not created by you, or in the sky or on the earth. May I become the undisputed emperor of all living entities, and may I have command over all the rulers of the various planets, headed by Indra, just as you have. May I also have the inexhaustible

opulence possessed by ascetics, mystic *yogīs*, and all other masters of yoga.”

Lord Brahmā granted all these benedictions. Hiraṇyakaśipu was very pleased, thinking that he had tricked Lord Brahmā by his clever choice of benedictions. He thought that by trick he has received the benediction of immortality, which ordinarily was impossible to acquire. It is the nature of the conditioned soul to try to cheat even the Supreme Lord, and so what to speak of others.

After receiving the benedictions of Lord Brahmā, Hiraṇyakaśipu conquered all directions and all planets within the three worlds, including the demigods, *asuras*, human beings, Gandharvas, Garuḍa, serpents, Siddhas, Cāraṇas, Vidyādhara, sages, forefathers, Manu, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, and ghosts, bringing them all under his control. After thus conquering the three worlds, Hiraṇyakaśipu took away the positions of the predominating lords of the various universal departments and began residing in the palace of Indra. He ordered his followers to kill all the *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas*, as well as those who were engaged in performing austerities, vows, sacrifices, charity, and study of the *Vedas*. His demoniac followers did exactly as they were told.

Although religious principles were being neglected throughout the three worlds because of Hiraṇyakaśipu’s rule, his son, Prahlaḍa, was a great devotee of the Supreme Lord. Even at the age of five he preached the glories of the devotional service of the

Lord to his father.

Understanding that Prahlaḍa was a devotee of his enemy, Lord Viṣṇu, Hiraṇyakaśipu ordered his followers to kill him. However, all the endeavors of the demons to destroy Prahlaḍa were baffled so that his father became anxious. Hiraṇyakaśipu tried his best to kill Prahlaḍa by trampling him under the feet of elephants, by snake bites, by throwing him from the top of a mountain, by sending the witch Kṛtyā to devour him, by ordering Śambarāsura to bewilder him with illusions, by throwing him into a blazing fire, by drowning him in the ocean, and by so many other means. And yet, his powerful father was not able to kill Prahlaḍa.

Prahlaḍa was tied tightly with the ropes of Varuṇa so that he could not move. His demoniac teachers tried to teach him about religiosity, economic development, and sense gratification, but Prahlaḍa was completely indifferent to such things. Prahlaḍa preached to his schoolmates during recess so that the boys also became devoted to the Supreme Lord. Seeing this, the teachers went and complained to Hiraṇyakaśipu. When Hiraṇyakaśipu received this news, his entire body trembled with anger and he decided to kill his son, Prahlaḍa, with his own hands. He severely chastised Prahlaḍa, asking him by whose power he was able to act against his father’s will.

Prahlaḍa humbly explained the position of the Supreme Lord, who is the omnipotent life and soul of everyone. However, this only served to further enrage Hiraṇyakaśipu.

Hiraṇyakaśipu roared, “Where is your Lord of the universe? If He is everywhere then why is He not seen in this pillar? Maybe you can see Him in this pillar, but when I cut off your head, let me see how your Lord Hari protects you.”

Saying this, Hiraṇyakaśipu jumped from his throne with a trident in his hand, and with his powerful fist, he struck the pillar. Just then a tumultuous sound came from that pillar. Hiraṇyakaśipu was about to grab Prahlāda and kill him, but upon hearing that wonderful sound, he was taken aback. Then suddenly he saw before him a most unusual creature that was neither man nor lion. This appearance of the Lord was extraordinary because He was half-man and half-lion.

The description of Lord Nṛsimhadeva is given in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam: His eyes were yellowish like molten gold, His jaws were wide, His tongue was just like a sharp sword, He had crooked eyebrows, His ears were firm and stood erect, His nose was raised, and His mouth resembled a mountain cave. His teeth were formidable and His body was gigantic, as if touching the sky. He had a short and compact neck, broad chest, and thin waist. His entire body was covered with shining pores, and He had many arms spread in the four directions. His sharp and large nails were used as weapons.

Lord Nṛsimhadeva played with Hiraṇyakaśipu for some time as a sport and finally, at the juncture of day and night, He laughed loudly with a grave voice. The Lord then caught hold of the demon and dragged

him to the doorway of the royal court. The Lord placed him upon His thighs and tore apart his abdomen with His nails. He took out the demon’s intestines and draped them around His neck. At that time He appeared like a victorious lion that had just killed an elephant.

Lord Nṛsimhadeva appeared at noon on the fourteenth day of the waxing moon in the month of Vaiśākha at Multan during the juncture of Satya-yuga and Tretā-yuga.



❀ Śrī Vāmana avatāra ❀

It is by the favor of the Supreme Lord that the demigods achieved victory in battle with the demons so that Indra was installed as the King of heaven. However, being puffed up with the pride of victory, the demigods forgot the Supreme Lord and became intoxicated by material enjoyment. On the other hand, the demons slowly regrouped themselves and enhanced their strength. They diligently served the *brāhmaṇas* belonging to the Bhṛgu dynasty, along with their spiritual master, Śukrācārya. As a result, the powerful Bhṛgu dynasty became very pleased with the demons and so they performed a Viśvajīta sacrifice with the help of Bali Mahārāja.

By the mercy of the *brāhmaṇas*, the fire-god personally appeared in the sacrificial arena and presented many gifts, including chariots and horses. The *brāhmaṇas* blessed

the demons, Śukrācārya gave them a celestial conchshell, and Prahlāda Mahārāja gave them a celestial garland. Being thus decorated and equipped with weapons, and after amassing their army of countless soldiers, the demons attacked Amarāvati, the capital of the demigods.

Being advised by Bṛhaspati, the demigods headed by Indra, left the heavenly planets and hid somewhere else. Thereafter, the descendents of Bhṛgu performed one hundred horse sacrifices. In this way, the demons regained their lost sovereignty and opulence so that they could enjoy life lavishly.

Meanwhile, being unhappy because the kingdom and opulence of her sons had been snatched away, mother Aditi, being advised by her husband, Kaśyapa, began observing severe vows known as Payovrata. Being pleased by her penance, the Supreme Lord appeared before Aditi and said, “The *brāhmaṇas*, as well as Providence, are now favoring Bali Mahārāja. Therefore the demons cannot be conquered. My plenary portion will soon appear as your son and protect your children.”

Thereafter, at noon, on the twelfth day of the waxing moon in the month of Bhādra, the Supreme Lord appeared before Kaśyapa and Aditi, having assumed the form of a dwarf *brahmacārī*. For that reason He was called Vāmana, or dwarf. All the great sages were jubilant upon seeing the Lord’s Vāmana form. They performed the child’s birth ceremony, which is known as *jāta-*

karma, having been invited by the sage, Kaśyapa.

When the sacred thread ceremony known as *upanayana-saṁskāra* was performed, the Sun-god imparted the Gāyatrī *mantra* to Lord Vāmana. Bṛhaspati offered Him the sacred thread and Kaśyapa gave Him a waist band. Mother Earth gave Him a black deerskin, the moon-god gave Him a staff, Mother Aditi presented Him a loincloth and cādara, the personified Sky gave Him an umbrella, Lord Brahmā presented Him a water pot, the seven sages offered Him *kuśa* grass, and Mother Sarasvatī gave the Lord *rudrākṣa* beads. Kuvera gave Lord Vāmana a begging bowl, and goddess Annapūrṇa gave Him alms. In this way, the Lord’s sacred thread ceremony was performed.

The Supreme Lord, Vāmanadeva, heard that, by the order of the *brāhmaṇas* of the Bhṛgu dynasty, King Bali was performing many horse sacrifices with incomparable opulence and so He immediately departed for the sacrificial arena.

There is a very nice story regarding the Lord’s journey to the sacrificial arena of Bali Mahārāja. As Vāmanadeva was on His way to King Bali’s sacrificial arena, He had to cross a deep river. He was carrying an umbrella, water pot, staff, waist band, cādara, and loincloth, and so it was a little difficult for Him to take care of all these things since He had appeared as a small boy. It is simply astonishing that the Lord, in whose pores millions of universes rest, felt the burden of carrying a water pot, cloth, and so on.

Having to cross the river, Lord Vāmana entered the water a few steps, but then came back to the shore. This pastime of entering the water and coming back to the shore went on for some time. Finally, the attention of an elderly *brāhmaṇa* who was performing his *bhajana* by the side of the river was spontaneously drawn towards the Lord. ❀

The elderly *brāhmaṇa* approached Vāmanadeva and learned that the young *brahmacārī* was on His way to the sacrificial arena of Bali Mahārāja, hoping to accept some charity. The *brāhmaṇa* was impressed by the *brahmacārī*'s glowing effulgence, and knowing that King Bali was very generous, he considered this to be a golden opportunity to receive some worthwhile *dakṣiṇā*. With this in mind, the *brāhmaṇa* made a deal that if the *brahmacārī* would give him half of whatever He might receive, he would help him cross the river.

Vāmanadeva agreed to this proposal and so the *brāhmaṇa* carried Him across the river on his shoulders. The moment he touched the Lord's transcendental body, the *brāhmaṇa* felt incomparable bliss. As the *brāhmaṇa*, who was captivated by the Lord's inconceivable beauty, sweetness, touch, and words, gazed at His lotus feet, he could understand that the young boy was not an ordinary *brahmacārī*, but the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. Indeed, it appeared as if the *brāhmaṇa* was drowning in an ocean of bliss.

When he had carried the Lord halfway across the river, the *brāhmaṇa* said, "I can

recognize You. You are the Lord of my heart. I will only let You go when You promise to deliver me from the ocean of material existence."

The Lord replied, "O learned *brāhmaṇa*, what are you saying? I am the son of Kaśyapa and Aditi, and I am going to beg for some alms from King Bali."

Still, the intelligent *brāhmaṇa* did not accept this because he was thoroughly convinced that this was his worshipable Lord. Finally, the Supreme Lord displayed His original form, finding it impossible to hide from his sincere devotee any longer.

After crossing the river, the Lord reminded the *brāhmaṇa* that the deal they had made would remain unchanged, and thus he should accompany Him to collect his share of whatever the king might offer in charity. The *brāhmaṇa* protested, saying, "My Lord, whatever I had said was in ignorance. Now I do not want anything from You." The Lord smiled at the *brāhmaṇa* and departed.

Bali Mahārāja was engaged in performing a great sacrifice on the order of the descendents of Bhṛgu. The sacrificial arena was located in the sacred place, Bhṛgukaccha, on the northern shore of the Narmadā River. While holding an umbrella, water pot, and staff, Lord Vāmana entered the sacrificial arena of Bali Mahārāja. He was wearing a waist band made of *muñja* grass, and He was adorned with a sacred thread. He wore deerskin and had matted hair.

Upon His arrival, Bali Mahārāja respectfully welcomed Lord Vāmana. After

washing His lotus feet, the king sprinkled the water over his head. Bali Mahārāja then very humbly said, “O young *brāhmaṇa*, it must be that You are in need of something. Whatever You want, You can have.”

The Lord replied “O King, your generosity is not only approved by religious principles, but in accordance with your family tradition.” After saying this, the Lord lavishly glorified Bali Mahārāja’s forefathers. He praised Bali’s father, Virocana, for his magnanimous nature, his grandfather, Prahlāda Mahārāja, for his firm devotion, and his great-grandfathers, Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyākṣā, for their immense prowess. He concluded by saying, “I only wish that you grant me three steps of land.”

Hearing this, Bali Mahārāja laughed and said, “If You only want three steps of land, then at least measure those with my followers’ steps so that You will obtain something that is *yojanas* in length and breadth.”

But Vāmanadeva was adamant. He replied, “No, I will measure the three steps with My own feet because one should accumulate wealth only to the extent that he requires. A *brāhmaṇa* who is satisfied with whatever he can collect by his own endeavors enhances his spiritual prowess. If he aspires for more, he will gradually fall down.”

Śukrācārya tried to warn Bali Mahārāja, saying, “This young *brāhmaṇa* boy is your enemy, Lord Viṣṇu, in disguise, and He has come here to take away everything from you. It is not a fault to lie if there is a threat to one’s livelihood.”

Still, the king refused to go back on his promise and so at last Śukrācārya cursed him to lose all of his opulence. Still, the exalted Bali Mahārāja did not go back on his words, thus falsifying his promise. He thought, “It is my solemn duty to always keep my word. If the Lord has come here to take away everything from me, even if I don’t voluntarily give Him what He wants, He will take everything by force, just as He did with my forefathers. Therefore it is better that I willingly give Him everything in charity. My spiritual master has cursed me to lose all my opulence and so somehow or other I will have to lose everything. Therefore it is better that I give Him what He wants in charity.”

Considering all this, Bali Mahārāja placed some water in his hand, thus resolving to give Lord Vāmana His request of three steps of land. When this decision was thus reached, Lord Vāmana began expanding Himself in such a way that all moving and non-moving living entities could be seen in His gigantic form. Seeing the entire universe present in the body of the Supreme Lord, the Supersoul of all living beings, the demons became frightened. With one step, Vāmanadeva covered the entire earthly planet ruled by Bali. Indeed, His body covered the entire sky and His arms covered all directions. With His second step, Vāmanadeva covered the heavenly planets, including the upper planetary systems; Maharaloka, Janaloka, Tapaloka, and Satyaloka. Lord Brahmā washed Vāmanadeva’s lotus feet when they

arrived at Satyaloka, and He worshiped them with offerings of *pādyā* and *argya*.

Meanwhile, the demon soldiers, realizing that the beggar *brahmacārī* was actually their enemy trying to help the demigods after assuming a disguise, and seeing how *Bali Mahārāja* had remained silent, being the performer of the sacrifice, began fighting with Lord *Vāmana* after taking up their weapons. However, the Lord's associates quickly drove them away while *Bali Mahārāja* stopped his soldiers from any further hostility.

Understanding the Lord's intentions, *Garuḍa* came and arrested *Bali Mahārāja* with the ropes of *Varuṇa*. Thereafter, *Vāmanadeva* said to *Bali*, "With two steps I covered your entire kingdom, consisting of the earth and upper planetary systems. Now, if you cannot fulfill your promise by giving Me a place for My third step, you will have to be punished in the hellish planets."

Even though Lord *Vāmana* chastised *Bali Mahārāja* so harshly, the king did not lose his gravity. He said, "My dear Lord, can I ask You something? Which is greater—wealth or the possessor of wealth?"

The Lord replied, "Because wealth remains under the control of its possessor, the possessor of wealth is greater than the wealth itself."

Bali Mahārāja said, "My Lord, You have taken away all of my possessions with two steps. Now, kindly place Your third step on my head, for I am the only thing remaining. I surrender everything unto Your lotus feet."

Lord *Vāmana* was very pleased to hear this. He said to *Brahmā*, "When I become pleased with someone, the first thing I do is take away his wealth. I have taken away *Bali*'s opulence and kingdom, chastised him severely, had him tied with the ropes of *Varuṇa*, separated him from his relatives, and caused him to be cursed by his spiritual master, and yet he has remained firm in his determination to keep his promise. I tried to deceive him by saying so many things, but he is so truthful that he has refused to renounce his virtue."

Thereafter, Lord *Vāmana* ordered *Bali Mahārāja* to reside in *Sataloka*, giving him the wonderful benediction that He would personally act as his doorman. Thus the Lord took away the heavenly kingdom from *Bali* to fulfill mother *Aditi*'s desire, and He returned it to *Indra*. Remaining as *Indra*'s elder brother, *Upendra*, Lord *Vāmana* began ruling the entire universe for the pleasure of *Kaśyapa* and *Aditi*, and for the prosperity of all living entities. Lord *Vāmana*'s coronation ceremony was performed, confirming that He is the Lord and master of all planets.

Lord *Vāmana* appeared at noon on the twelfth day of the waxing moon in the month of *Bhādra* at *Prayāga* during *Tretā-yuga*.



❀ Śrī Paraśurāma avatāra ❀

According to the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, Lord

Brahmā's son, King Kuśa, had four sons, and Kuśanābha was the second. King Kuśanābha once performed a sacrifice in the hopes of receiving a son. The sacrifice was successful and so he was blessed with a pious son named Gādhi. King Gādhi had a daughter named Satyavatī, who was married to the great sage, Ṛcika.

One day, Satyavatī and her mother approached sage Ṛcika with a desire to have a son. The great sage gave two small clay pots of sweetrice to Satyavatī with the instruction that one of them was for her, and the other was for her mother. After saying this, the sage left to take his bath. When they were about to consume the sweetrice, the mother said, "My dear daughter, everyone wants a heroic son. Give me your sweet rice and take mine because my son will have to rule the entire earth, whereas a *brāhmaṇa*'s sons have no need for strength and wealth."

Satyavatī gave her sweetrice to her mother, and when the sage came to know of this, he said to his wife, "You have made a big mistake. What you did was very foolish. Now that this has happened, your son will be a great warrior whereas your brother will be a learned transcendentalist."

When Satyavatī repeatedly requested the sage to alter this unwanted chain of events, he said, "Your son will not be a fierce warrior, but your grandson will."

Thus it came to be that King Gādhi's wife gave birth to the sage, Viśvāmitra, who was a great ascetic and learned sage, even though he was a *kṣatriya*, and sage Ṛcika's

son, Jamadagni, was also a very sober, self-controlled sage, but his son, Paraśurāma, was a fierce warrior.

One day, sage Jamadagni sent his wife, Reṇukā, to bring some water from the river. A Gandharva couple was enjoying conjugal love in the river and while collecting water, Reṇukā watched them with fascination so that she returned home late. Jamadagni could understand the reason for her being late. Considering it to be a great sin for a wife to watch others engaging in sexual activity, he called for his sons and ordered them to kill their mother.

Out of affection for their mother, seven of the sons refused to kill her, but not the eighth son, Paraśurāma. Without hesitation, Paraśurāma cut off not only the head of his mother, but the heads of his disobedient brothers as well. Jamadagni was very pleased and so he requested Paraśurāma to accept a benediction. In reply, Paraśurāma said, "May my mother and brothers regain their lives, and may they never remember that I had killed them. May no sin for killing them touch me, may no one be capable of competing with me on the battlefield, and may I live a long life."

The great ascetic, Jamadagni, granted all these boons. There was a king named Sahasrārjuna who ruled from his city, Māhiṣmatipuri. He had received benedictions from Dattātreya that no one could compete with him in battle, that he would have one thousand arms while fighting, and that his movements would never be checked.

Being intoxicated by these benedictions, he tortured the demigods, sages, and Yakṣas. Indeed, all living entities were harassed by him.

Once, being puffed up by his incomparable strength, he covered the ocean with his onslaught of arrows. The presiding deity of the ocean appeared before him and said with folded hands, “O valiant hero, please order me as to what I can do for you.”

The King replied, “Tell me if there is anyone in creation who is as powerful with the bow as I, and who can thus compete with me in battle. If you can inform me of such a person then I will leave you alone.”

The Ocean personified said, “The great sage Jamadagni’s son, Paraśurāma, is a good match for you. Go to him and challenge him to fight.”

After hearing this, the king decided to challenge the son of Jamadagni. Soon thereafter, with an army of one *akṣauhiṇī*, consisting of 21,870 chariots, 21,870 elephants, 109,650 infantry, and 65,600 cavalry. King Sahasrārjuna arrived at Jamadagni’s *āśrama*. The sage respectfully greeted the king and served him with an impressive display of opulence. The king was surprised, thinking, “How can a hermitage contain such diverse wealth?”

Then realizing that the opulence was manifested from the sage’s *surabhi* cow, the king demanded to have it as a gift. When the sage refused to give his *surabhi* cow, the king forcibly took it after killing the sage. At that time, Paraśurāma was not at home.

When Paraśurāma returned home and saw his mother crying, he asked her what had happened. When he heard from his mother about all that had taken place, he resolved to rid the earth of all *kṣatriyas*. It is said that because, while lamenting, his mother had beat her chest twenty-one times, Paraśurāma annihilated the *kṣatriyas* twenty-one times.

Paraśurāma bravely fought with the thousand-armed king, finally cutting off his arms and head. Still, his anger was not pacified and so he killed the king’s entire family, which were members of the Haihaya dynasty. After completely annihilating all the *kṣatriyas*, he handed over the kingdom of the earth to the *brāhmaṇas*. Later on, the *kṣatriyas* that were able to escape the great slaughter regrouped and regained their kingdom from the *brāhmaṇas* after tactfully feeding them sumptuously.

Paraśurāma again annihilated the *kṣatriyas* and returned the kingdom to the *brāhmaṇas*, but later on, the remaining *kṣatriyas* easily took it back. Because of this, Paraśurāma angrily cursed the *brāhmaṇas*, saying, “Even after receiving the kingdom, you continued to live like beggars and so, may you always remain beggars.”

After annihilating the *kṣatriyas* twenty-one times, Paraśurāma performed a horse sacrifice, after which he rewarded the sage Kaśyapa with a gift of the entire earth. So that the earth would not be completely devoid of *kṣatriyas*, Kaśyapa said to Paraśurāma, “The earth will be ruled by me and so you should depart towards the Southern Ocean.”

Since Paraśurāma's forefathers had advised him to stop killing all the *kṣatriyas*, and the sage Kaśyapa had also requested him to give up the earth, Paraśurāma finally decided to renounce fighting forever. The Ocean personified gave him Mount Mahendra, which is situated nearby.

Paraśurāma was an empowered incarnation of the Supreme Lord. When Lord Rāmacandra appeared in this world, Paraśurāma's mission came to an end. When Lord Rāmacandra broke the bow of Lord Śiva, Paraśurāma came and displayed his anger. Later on, however, after realizing the truth of Lord Rāma, Paraśurāma handed over his Vaiṣṇava bow to Him, and after offering Him repeated obeisances, he departed for Mount Mahendra to perform penance.

Śrī Paraśurāma appeared at midday on the third day of the waxing moon in the month of Vaiśākha in the village of Yamuniyā (in present day Bihar).



❁ Ś R I R ā m a a v a t ā r a ❁

Lord Rāmacandra appeared as the son of King Daśaratha, the emperor of the entire earth, on the ninth day of the waxing moon in the month of Caitra. Rāma appeared from the womb of Kauśalyā, Bharata appeared from the womb of Kaikeyi, and Lakṣman and Śatrughna appeared from the womb

of Sumitrā. In due course of time, the head shaving, name giving, sacred thread, and other *saṁskārās* were performed with great pomp. Rāma was then sent to the *gurukula*, where He learned everything in a very short time. In this way, Lord Rāma happily arrived at His youth.

One day, sage Viśvāmitra came to take Rāma and Lakṣmana from King Daśaratha so that They could protect his performance of sacrifice. Rāma and Lakṣmana effortlessly killed many demons, headed by Tāḍakā, Mārīca, and Subāhu, thus enabling the sage to complete his sacrifice without any disturbance. Thereafter, Rāma went to Janakapura with sage Viśvāmitra to attend Sitā's *svayamvara*. While there, He broke the gigantic bow of Śambhu, which great heroes could not even bend, just as a maddened elephant tears apart a lotus flower.

Some time after the bow was broken, Paraśurāma appeared before Rāma, and although in the beginning he was furious, he ultimately became pacified. The auspicious news was sent to Ayodhyā and so King Daśaratha came to see Lord Rāmacandra's marriage with Sitā, which was conducted with great pomp. Indeed, all the inhabitants of Mithilā took part in the celebration.

About twelve years after Lord Rāmacandra's marriage, King Daśaratha decided to install Him as the next King of Ayodhyā, considering Him to be the most qualified of his sons. Besides, He was the eldest, and it was unanimously accepted that He was ever engaged in working for

the welfare of the subjects. While the preparations for the coronation ceremony were being arranged, Queen Kaikeyi, who had earlier received a benediction from her husband and was bewildered by the Lord's illusory energy, being induced by her maidservant, Mantharā, asked the king to send Rāma into exile and install Bharata as the next King of Ayodhyā instead. To please Kaikeyi, to act in accordance with His father's order, and to keep His own promise, the valiant Śrī Rāma went to live in the forest. Sitā, the princess of Mithilā and a descendent in the Videha dynasty, as well as Sumitrā's son, Lakṣmana, accompanied Lord Rāma.

Upon arriving at the shore of the Gangā at Śrṅgaverapura, Lord Rāma met His dear friend, Guhaka, and sent his chariot driver, Sumanta, back to Ayodhyā. In the company of Guhaka, Lakṣmana, and Sitā, Lord Rāma crossed many rivers and traversed many forests, one after another. He met the great sage, Bharadwāja, sent Guhaka back home, met the great sage Vālmiki, and on his advise went to Citrakūṭa, where he built a cottage and began residing there, performing wonderful pastimes.

Meanwhile, in Ayodhyā, King Daśaratha left this world due the grief caused by separation from his son, Rāma. The *brāhmaṇas*, headed by Vaśiṣṭha, wanted to engage the greatly powerful Bharata in ruling the kingdom, but not being willing to do so, Bharata left for the forest to find Rāmacandra.

Upon meeting his elder brother, Bharata said with folded hands, "O Knower of religious principles, You are the actual king." But Lord Rāma had no desire to rule the kingdom and thus disobey the order of His father. Thus He sent Bharata back to Ayodhyā with His wooden slippers. Bharata offered his respectful obeisances unto Lord Rāma and returned to Nandigrāma, from where he began carrying out the responsibility of ruling the kingdom while waiting for Lord Rāma's arrival.

After Bharata's departure, Rāma, who was always fixed in truthfulness, seeing the frequent visits of the subjects, left for Daṇḍakāraṇya so that He could stay aloof from them. In that dense forest, Lord Rāma killed a demon named Virādha, and met many sages, including Śarabandha, Sutikṣṇa, and Agastya. He promised that He would vanquish all of the demons residing in Daṇḍakāraṇya so that the sages could perform their respective duties peacefully.

While residing in the forest, Lord Rāma had Śūrpaṇakhā, a resident of Janasthāna who could change her form at will, disfigured by asking Lakṣmaṇa to cut off her nose and ears. Thereafter, being induced by Śūrpaṇakhā, fourteen thousand demons headed by Khara, Dūṣaṇa, and Trisira attacked Rāma, but were effortlessly killed by Him in the battle that ensued.

Thereafter, with a desire to take revenge, Rāvana, the King of the demons, with the help of Mārīca, kidnapped Jānaki. On the way, Jaṭāyu tried to stop Rāvana and was

critically injured by him. It was Jaṭāyu who informed Rāma about Jānaki's abductor. It was Lord Rāma who performed the last rites of Jaṭāyu, who left his body while lying on the Lord's lap.

While searching for Sītā, Rāmacandra came upon a demon named Kabandha and killed him. By the hint given by Kabandha, Rāma arrived at the place of the great Vaiṣṇavī, Śabarī, who worshiped Him with love and devotion. Śrī Rāma respected Śabarī just like his own mother and awarded her the supreme destination. Then, following the advice of Śabarī, Lord Rāma met Hanumān and became friends with Sugrīva. For the sake of His friend, He killed Bālī and re-established Sugrīva as the king.

Thereafter, King Sugrīva summoned all the monkeys and ordered them to look for Sītā. Hanumān jumped one hundred *yojanas* across the sea and arrived at Laṅkā, the place that the vulture, Sampātī, had indicated was the abode of Rāvana. Upon arriving at Laṅkā, Hanumān saw Sītā sitting morosely in a garden called Aśoka Vātikā.

Hanumān showed Sītā Rāma's ring as proof of his genuine intentions and delivered to her the message given by the Lord. Hanumān pacified Sītā in so many ways, and after ravaging the city of Laṅkā and killing countless demons, including Akṣaya Kumāra, he surrendered. Although Hanumān was free from the mystical ropes binding him by the benediction of Brahmā, he willingly tolerated the offenses of the demons. After burning a great deal of Laṅkā,

mighty Hanumān return to convey the good news to Rāma. He first circumambulated Lord Rāma and then informed him of Sītā's whereabouts.

Thereafter, Lord Rāma, along with countless monkey soldiers, arrived at the seashore, agitating its waters with His arrows, which were as brilliant as the sun. The presiding deity of the ocean appeared before Lord Rāma, advising Him to construct a bridge over the ocean with the help of Nala, Nila, and other monkey soldiers. Crossing the ocean on the bridge, the Lord arrived at the city of Laṅkā, where He regained Sītā after killing Rāvaṇa and his family.

Since Rāma was not able to tolerate any stain to His reputation, He spoke harshly to Sītā in a great assembly. Not being able to tolerate His harsh words, chaste Sītā proved her chastity by entering fire. Then, accepting the statement of Agni, the god of fire, Lord Rāmacandra again accepted Sītā as His chaste wife. When Sītā and Lord Rāma were thus reunited, all the demigods and sages, along with all the other inhabitants of the three worlds, became satisfied.

The Lord was worshiped by all the demigods and thereafter, He installed Vibhīṣaṇa as the ruler of Laṅkā. After reviving the monkey soldiers that had died in the battle, Lord Rāma boarded a flower airplane along with His associates and returned to Ayodhyā.

Arriving near the āśrama of sage Bharadvāja, all-powerful Lord Rāmacandra, who is always fixed in truth and who gives pleasure to everyone, sent Hanumān ahead

to give the news of their impending arrival to Bharata. Thereafter, receiving the news of Ayodhyā from Hanumān, Lord Rāma s left Bharadvāja's āśrama. Upon returning to Ayodhyā, the Lord was astonished to see the love and affection the residents had for Him. Later, by the order of sage, Vaṣiṣṭha, Lord Rāmacandra was installed on the royal throne as the King of Ayodhyā. Seeing Lord Rāma seated upon the royal throne, all the inhabitants of the three worlds became joyful.

Śrī Rāma avatāra appeared on the ninth day of the waxing moon in the month of Caitra at Ayodhyā in the Tretā-yuga.



❀ Śrī Kṛṣṇa Avatāra ❀

In order to protect the devotees, destroy the demons, and re-establish religious principles, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the reservoir of all transcendental mellows who is full of six opulences, and who is the master of all planets, appeared at midnight on the eighth day of the waning moon in the month of Bhādra within Kāṁsa's prison in His four-armed form as Lord Viṣṇu.

Being requested by His mother, Devakī, who was immersed in the mood of vātsalya affection, the Lord, who is always affectionate to His devotees, assumed a form like that of an ordinary child. By the Lord's order, His

father, Vasudeva, took baby Kṛṣṇa to the house of Nanda Mhārāja. After placing the child next to mother Yaśodā, he brought back goddess Mahāmāyā, who had appeared from her womb.

Kṛṣṇa's birth ceremony was performed at the house of Nanda. All of the transcendental pastimes He performed, beginning from His appearance, were extraordinary. When Kṛṣṇa was a small child lying on His bed, He sucked out the life air of Pūtānā, a child killing and blood sucking witch, along with her breast milk. He killed many demons in Vraja, including Śakaṭāsura, Tṛṇāvarta, Bakāsura, Vatsāsura, Dhenukāsura, and Pralambhāsura. He protected the cowherd inhabitants of Vṛndāvana from a blazing forest fire. He subdued the serpent Kāliya and released His father, Nanda Mahārāja, from the grips of a python.

When the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana observed a vow in the hopes of obtaining Kṛṣṇa as their husband, He became pleased and gave them their desired benediction. The Supreme Lord bestowed mercy upon the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* who were performing sacrifice. When Kṛṣṇa lifted Govardhana Hill, Indra and a *surabhi* cow came and performed His *abhiṣeka*. Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoyed the *rāsa* dance with the beautiful damsels of Vraja on a full moon night of the autumn season. He also killed the wicked Śaṅkhacūḍa, Ariṣṭāsura, and Keśi demons.

Thereafter, Akrūra went to Vṛndāvana and brought Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to Mathurā. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma saw the wonderful

decorations in Mathurā and then killed the elephant, Kuvalayāpiḍa the wrestler, Cānura; and Kāṁsa. Thereafter, Kṛṣṇa went to the *gurukula* and studied the scriptures from Sāṁdipani Muni. He returned His teacher's dead son as *dakṣiṇa*.

While Kṛṣṇa was residing in Mathurā, along with Balarāma and Uddhava, He satisfied the members of the Yadu dynasty in all respects. Jarāsandha repeatedly attacked Mathurā with his vast army, but every time Kṛṣṇa defeated him. Finally, He killed Jarāsandha, thus diminishing the burden of the earth. Kṛṣṇa had Mucukunda burn to ashes the demon, Kālayavana.

Kṛṣṇa established the city of Dvārakā and sent His relatives to reside there. Kṛṣṇa brought the *pārijāta* tree from heaven, as well as the celestial assembly hall known as Sudharmā.

Lord Kṛṣṇa kidnapped Rukmiṇī and defeated the many enemies who opposed Him. When Kṛṣṇa was fighting with Bāṇāsura, He released a weapon that caused Mahādeva to repeatedly yawn. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Kṛṣṇa cut off Bāṇāsura's arms.

Kṛṣṇa killed Bhaumāsura, the King of Prāgjyotiṣapura, and delivered sixteen thousand princesses whom He married. He smashed the pride of many demons, such as Śiśupāla, Pauṇḍraka, Śālva, Dantavakra, Śambarāsura, Dvidida, Piṭha, Mūra, and Pañcajana. He reduced the burden of the earth during the battle of Kurukṣetra using the Pāṇḍavas as instruments, and finally, He

annihilated the entire Yadu dynasty on the pretext of a *brāhmaṇa*'s curse.

When Uddhava inquired from Him, Kṛṣṇa imparted to him the full science of self-realization. Thus there were an unlimited number of wonderful pastimes performed by Lord Kṛṣṇa. By hearing about these pastimes, all the living entities of the world become purified.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa avatāra appeared on the eighth day of the waning moon in the month of Bhādra within Kāṁsa's prison at Mathurā.



❁ Śrī Buddha avatāra ❁

Once, the demons asked Indra how their kingdom could remain steady and intact. Indra replied that the demons should perform sacrifices and follow the Vedic injunctions. Thus the demons began performing sacrifices, but because they were by nature in the mode of ignorance, all their religious practices, including their performance of pious activities, including sacrifices, as well as their execution of vows and their gifts of charity, were done under the control of the mode of ignorance. Others began following the demons' system of religion and so to stop them from acting impiously, the Supreme Lord appeared at the end of Dvāpara-yuga as Lord Buddha from the womb of Māyādevī, the wife of

Śuddhodana. Since this family belonged to the dynasty of Gautama, He was known as Gautama Buddha. The appearance and activities of Lord Buddha are described in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Akrūra has described Lord Buddha as the bewilderer of the demons. Lord Buddha's childhood name was Siddhārtha. He was very merciful by nature and could not tolerate any one's distress. For this reason, His father, Śuddhodana, made an arrangement so that no distressful incident would come in front of his vision. In spite of this, by the arrangement of Providence, Siddhārtha one day happened to see a diseased person. A few days later, he saw a very old person, and after that, he saw a dead body, which caused his entire body to tremble. From that day onward, he became indifferent to the world and its dualities.

Seeing His indifference, Siddhārtha's parents arranged for his marriage to a beautiful girl, named Yaśodharā, so that he would become attached to family life. In due course of time, a child was born, who was given the name Rāhul. In spite of getting married and having a child, Siddhārtha's indifference remained unaffected, and indeed increased, day by day. Finally, in the prime of his youth, he abandoned his dear wife, Yaśodharā, his newborn son, Rāhul, His affectionate father, King Śuddhodana, and His opulent kingdom.

Siddhārtha's aim was to conquer the vicious cycle of repeated birth, disease, old-age, and death. He was looking for a

means to attain immortality. He met many learned scholars but still was not satisfied. Being disappointed, he went to a forest near Gayā and began executing austerities. He would sit unmoving under a tree during summer, during winter, and during the rainy season. He stopped taking any kind of food. Because of his lengthy practice of penance, his body became thin, but his determination remained intact. He was unaware of the miserable conditions around Him.

One day, as Siddhārtha was engaged in his penance, a group of singing ladies passed by. When they passed by Siddhārtha's hermitage, they were singing a particular song which meant "Do not take off the strings of a stringed instrument, for if you do, you will not be able to create a nice melody, nor should you pull the strings too hard, for they might break."

When Siddhārtha Gautama heard these lines, he immediately became enlightened. He now understood that for the practice of one's sādhanā, there is no need for severe penance, and that sufficient food and rest were also required. Since he received such *bodha*, or enlightenment, he became known as Buddha. After being spiritually enlightened, Lord Buddha went to Vārāṇasī and imparted His first instructions at Sārānātha. According to him, truthfulness, non-violence, piety, not accepting anything from others, celibacy, the renunciation of singing and dancing, eating regularly, and the renunciation of a soft bed, women, and gold are the ways to uproot the miserable

conditions of life and attain *nirvāna*, or liberation.

Lord Buddha's slogan was *dharmam śaraṇam gacchāmī, buddham śaraṇam gacchāmī, saṅgham śaraṇam gacchāmī*. Gautama Buddha was the embodiment of peace, tolerance, and compassion.

Once, a *brāhmaṇa* named Bharadvāja took initiation from Him and became a mendicant. As a result, one of his relatives became very angry and went to Lord Buddha, calling him ill names. Still, Lord Buddha remained silent and peaceful. For how long could the *brāhmaṇa* shout and chastise him? After awhile, that person became quiet and so Lord Buddha asked, "O brother, do you ever receive guests at your house?"

The *brāhmaṇa* replied, "Of course I do." Lord Buddha asked, "Do you serve them?" The *brāhmaṇa* angrily replied, "Only a fool would not serve a guest." Lord Buddhā said, "Just imagine if your guests did not accept the things you offered them. What would happen to those things? Where would they go?" The *brāhmaṇa* angrily replied, "This is a stupid question! Of course the things that were not accepted would come back to me." Then Lord Buddha politely said, "O *brāhmaṇa*, I did not accept the abusive words you gave to me and so where will they go? Who will possess them?" The *brāhmaṇa* lowered his head in shame and immediately begged forgiveness from Lord Buddha.

One day, a disciple of Lord Buddha named Pūrṇa approached Him. After receiving instructions from Lord Buddha, he begged

permission to go out and preach at a place called Sunaparanta. Lord Buddha said, "Generally, the people of that area are very materialistic and cruel. What if they mistreat you and blaspheme you? How would you feel?"

The disciple, Pūrṇa, replied, "My dear Lord, if the people act in this way, I will consider them to be good people because at least they have not slapped me or beaten me with sticks."

Lord Buddha asked, "What if they slap you and beat you?" Pūrṇa replied, "I will think that they are saintly because they did not throw stones at me or beat me with sticks." Lord Buddha said, "They may also throw stones at you and beat you with sticks. What would you do then?" Pūrṇa replied, "I will think that they are very merciful, for they did not use any weapons against me." Lord Buddha said, "What if they actually use weapons?" Pūrṇa replied, "Since they did not kill me, I will consider them good people."

Lord Buddha said, "You cannot guarantee that they will not kill you." Pūrṇa replied, "This material world is full of miseries, and this body is a house full of diseases. Committing suicide is a sin and so one must continue living in all circumstances. So if the people of that province kill me, they will actually be doing me a favor. They should be known as generous people." To this Lord Buddha smilingly replied, "O Pūrṇa, a genuine *sādhū* is one who does not find fault with others in any circumstance. Now

you may go anywhere you desire. Virtue will always protect you.”

There was a lady named Gautamī whose only son had died so that she was drowning in a pool of lamentation. She embraced her dead son and ran here and there, screaming, “Will someone give me some medicine? Will someone revive my son?” People tried to pacify her in so many ways, but she could not understand anything they said. Seeing her pathetic condition, a sober personality advised her to approach Lord Buddha, assuring her that he would certainly remove her distress.

While crying profusely, Gautamī ran with the dead son in her arms to Lord Buddha and appealed to Him to revive him. Lord Buddha said, “It is very good that you have come here. I will bring your son back to life. Just go and bring some mustard seeds from a house where no one has ever died.”

Gautamī ran to many houses, clasping her dead son to her chest, begging for a few grains of mustard seeds. When everyone heard about the condition that she could collect mustard seeds only from a house where no one had ever died, they all declined to help her. She got the same answer at each and every house. Finally she realized that people die in every house, because after all, death is inevitable. Anyone who takes birth must die. Death cannot be avoided by any means. If death could be avoided then how could anyone allow his dear one to depart from this world? This is the simple truth that is found all over the world.

When Gautamī understood this simple truth, she took the dead body of her son to the crematorium. Thereafter, she returned to Lord Buddha and explained to him all that had transpired. Lord Buddha said, “One who takes birth in the material world has to die. This is sure and certain. Therefore, instead of lamenting someone’s death, we should contemplate the state of existence where, once going, one never returns to this world of birth and death. If there is no birth, there will be no death. This is the conclusion every intelligent person should come to.

Śrī Buddha avatāra appeared in the morning on the seventh day of the waxing moon in the month of Vaiśākha at Gayā.



❀ Śrī Kalki avatāra ❀

At the end of Kali-yuga, when even the friends and family members of a saintly person will create impediments on his path of spiritual cultivation, when the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, and *vaiśyas* will be transformed into atheists, when the king of the country will be a *sūdra*, and when the rulers will plunder the citizens’ wealth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead will incarnate as Kalki in the house of the *brāhmaṇa*, Viṣṇuyasa, in the village of Śambhala. This is confirmed in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.25, 2.7.38, and 12.2.18. The Lord’s name will be Kalki Viṣṇuyasa.

Simply by His remembrance, everything,

including conveyances, weapons, armies, and armor will appear before the Lord as if summoned. Lord Paraśurāma will teach Him the *Vedas*, and Lord Śiva will teach Him the art of employing weapons, and he will also give Him a celestial horse and trident.

Thereafter, accompanied by His army, Lord Kalki will annihilate all the *mlechas*, wherever they may be on the surface of the earth. By annihilating all kinds of sinful miscreants, He will bring about the commencement of Satya-yuga. As the son of a *brāhmaṇa*, Lord Kalki will be a very powerful and intelligent personality. He will always be victorious in battles fought in terms of the principles of religion, and He will rule the entire earth, thus giving pleasure to all classes of men. (*Mahābhārata, Vana-Parva* 190.95.96)

❁ Śrī Vyāsa avatāra ❁

The King of heaven, Indra, once gave Vasu, the King of Cedi, a celestial chariot. Sitting on his chariot, Vasu would fly to the highest places in the universe and so he was called Uparicara Vasu. Once, King Vasu left his wife, who desired a son and thus prayed for her husband's association, and went to the forest to kill some animals for the satisfaction of his forefathers. While seeing the beauty of the forest during autumn, the king became agitated by lust, and as a result, he discharged semen.

Considering that his semen should not be wasted, and that his queen's prayer for a child should not go in vain, the king

preserved the semen in an *aśoka* leaf and sent it to his queen with the help of a falcon. By the arrangement of Providence, the falcon fought with another falcon while enroute so that the semen fell into the River Yamunā, where a fish who was the Apsarā, Adrikā, who had been cursed by Brahmā, drank it.

After some time, when some fishermen caught that fish and cut open her abdomen, they found a beautiful baby boy and baby girl. The fishermen offered both children to King Uparicara Vasu. The king kept the baby boy, who later on became an exalted king named Matsya. Since a fishy smell was emanating from the baby girl's body, the king gave her to a fisherman named Dāsarāja. This child was very beautiful and truthful by nature and so she was given the name Satyavatī.

Satyavatī plied a boat on the river and one day, Parāśara Muni was her passenger. Being enamored by Satyavatī, Parāśara begot Śrīla Vyāsadeva in her womb while they were mid-stream. Because he was born on an island, Vyāsadeva was called Dvaipāyana.

In Dvāpara-yuga, Śrīla Vyāsadeva appeared as an empowered incarnation of the Lord. Understanding that all the good qualities of men would diminish during the upcoming Kali-yuga, he divided the *Veda* into four, and compiled eighteen *Purāṇas*, one hundred and eight *Upaniṣads*, *Vedānta-sūtra*, and *Mahābhārata*. Because he expanded the Vedic knowledge, he became known as Vedavyāsa. Being instructed by his spiritual master, Nārada Muni, he

compiled the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is the ripened fruit of all Vedic literature and the natural commentary on *Vedānta*.

liberating both Gajendra and the crocodile. The Lord is known as Hari because He takes away the distresses of His devotees.

❀ Śrī Pṛthu avatāra ❀

When king Vena ruled the earth in a sinful manner and created havoc in society, the sages became very angry and cursed him. As a result, he fell down from his position into a hellish condition of life. Thereafter, the sages and *brāhmaṇas* prayed to the Supreme Lord while churning the dead body of King Vena. From the churning there appeared a great personality named Pṛthu. Śrī Pṛthu Mahārāja then milked the earth, who had assumed the form of a cow, thus collecting all the necessary ingredients for the welfare of mankind. He fulfilled the desires of all living entities within his kingdom and was thus celebrated as a perfect and devoted king. He performed countless sacrifices and thereby delivered his sinful father from his hellish condition.

❀ Śrī Hari avatāra ❀

The Supreme Lord appeared in this form at the base of Trikūṭa Mountain. When a crocodile attacked the king of elephants, Gajendra, the Supreme Lord, after hearing his ardent appeal, appeared and released him from the grips of his adversary. The Supreme Lord in His form of Hari killed the crocodile with His Sudarśaṇa *cakra*, thus

❀ Śrī Hamsa avatāra ❀

Once, the four sons of Brahmā, named Sanaka, Sananda, Sanat-kumāra, and Sanātana, asked their father how they could remain aloof from the influence of the three modes of material nature, since the mind is always attracted towards those modes. When Lord Brahmā was unable to properly answer, he remembered the Supreme Lord. In response, the Lord appeared as Hamsa avatāra and imparted instructions to the sons of Brahmā, headed by Sanaka.

❀ Śrī Manvantara Avatāra ❀

There are fourteen Manus in a day of Lord Brahmā. During the reign of each Manu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead appears in various forms to protect the dynasty of each Manu and destroy the miscreants. These incarnations are known as Manvantara *avatāras*.

❀ Śrī Yañja Avatāra ❀

There was a Prajāpati named Ruci, whose wife's name was Ākūti. The Supreme Lord appeared as their son, Yajña. He in turn had sons, headed by Yāma.

❁ Ś rī R ṣ a b h a a v a t ā r a ❁

Lord Rṣabhadeva appeared from the womb of Meru-devī, the wife of King Nābhi. He instructed his one hundred sons, headed by Bharata, in the path of liberation which is pursued by the *paramahamsas*, or swan-like personalities. This sublime path for realization of the Absolute Truth is highly regarded by the members of all *varṇas* and *āśramas*. Among His sons were the Nava-yogendras and King Bharata, in whose name this land has become known as Bhārata-varṣa.

❁ Ś rī H a y a g r ī v a a v a t ā r a ❁

Once, when Lord Brahmā was performing a sacrifice, the Supreme Lord assumed the form of a gigantic horse, named Hayagrīva, having a golden effulgence. The Vedic *mantras* appeared from Hayagrīva's nostril. He imparted the Vedic knowledge, which had been lost in the course of time, to the great sages, and He killed the demons that were creating disturbances to the sacrifice of Brahmā.

❁ Ś rī D h r u v a - v a r a d a a v a t ā r a ❁

When young prince Dhruva was insulted by his stepmother, he went to the forest on the advice of his mother to perform severe penance to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He stood on one leg and practiced severe austerities, and the Supreme Lord appeared before him in His four-armed

form, holding a conchshell, *cakra*, club, and lotus flower. The Lord gave Dhruva the benediction that he would become the ruler of the topmost planet within the universe, Dhruvaloka, which is the local Vaikuṇṭha planet.

Śrī Dhanvantarī avatāra: When the demigods and demons churned the ocean of milk to produce nectar, the Supreme Lord appeared as Dhanvantari, holding a pitcher of nectar. Although the demons snatched the pot from His hands, the Lord skilfully recovered the nectar and distributed it to the demigods. Lord Dhanvantari then made arrangements so that the demigods would receive the shares of sacrificial offerings that had been forcibly taken from them. He is best known for mercifully imparting the knowledge of Āyurveda for the benefit of human society.

❁ Ś rī B a d r ī p a t i a v a t ā r a ❁

The Supreme Lord appeared as Nara-Nārāyaṇa Rṣi from the womb of Dakṣa's daughter, the wife of Dharma. He performed severe austerities for the benefit of the entire world. Even today He is practicing severe austerities at Badrinātha, which is situated in Uttarakhaṇḍa. He is the worshipable Lord of this province. By the influence of His austerities, the Apsarā, Urvaṣī, who was sent by Indra, was defeated. Even today Urvaṣī enhances the beauty of the heavenly planets.

❀ **Śrī Dattātreya avatāra** ❀

Śrī Dattātreya appeared as the son of the great sage Atri and his wife, Anasūyā, at Citrakūṭa. He was given this name because, while awarding benedictions, He said, “I have given (datta) Myself to you.” By worshiping the lotus feet of Lord Dattātreya, many kings, including Yadu and Sahasrārjuna, attained unsurpassed material opulence and ultimately, liberation.

❀ **Śrī Kapiladeva avatāra** ❀

The Supreme Lord appeared at a place near Bindusarovara, as did His nine sisters. His father was the great sage, Kardama Muni, and His mother was Devahūti. Lord Kapila instructed His mother in the science of self-realization by which she could understand His actual identity as the Supreme Lord. From Bindusarovara, the Lord traveled to the seashore, where He continued to reside.

Once, the sons of King Sagara went to where Lord Kapila was residing while searching for the stolen sacrificial horse, and they were burnt to ashes because of their misconduct. By the mercy of the Lord, mother Gaṅgā descended to the earth and delivered the sons of Sagara. Lord Kapila is still present at Gaṅgā-sāgara. He instructed the Sāṅkhya philosophy to a group of sages.

❀ **Śrī Sanakādika avatāra** ❀

In the beginning, Lord Brahmā underwent

severe austerities so that he could recreate the universe as it was before. Being pleased by his austerities, the Supreme Lord incarnated as his sons—Sanaka, Sananda, Sanat-kumāra, and Sanātana. In this incarnation, the Lord systematically taught the sages the science of self-realization which had been forgotten due to the dissolution during the previous *kalpa*. These four sons of Brahmā were strict celibates who were well acquainted with all branches of spiritual knowledge. By performing austerities, they brought auspiciousness to the world.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead incarnates to protect the devotees, annihilate the miscreants, and re-establish the principles of religion. For these reasons the Supreme Personality of Godhead incarnates in every *yuga*. All the incarnations of the Lord are affectionate toward His devotees as They exhibit an ocean of eternal happiness. There is no limit to Their holy names, forms qualities, and pastimes.

In order to deliver the conditioned souls, the Supreme Lord assumes various incarnations and enacts His pastimes in this world. According to the internal mood and desire of His devotees, the Supreme Lord accepts various forms and reciprocates with them accordingly. The loving exchanges between the Supreme Lord and the devotees are eternal.

All of the Lord’s forms are sources of unlimited pleasure. Therefore who can measure the waves of transcendental ecstatic

love generated when the Lord incarnates in this world? All of the incarnations of the Lord are eternal. When the devotees meditate upon these eternal forms, the Lord fills their hearts with love of Godhead. Indeed, the devotees become so happy by realizing the Lord that they are like poor persons receiving a vast amount of wealth. This transcendental realization is only possible when one understands the confidential truth of the Supreme Lord's appearance.

Just as curly hair is not ugly, but an indication of beauty, so the various incarnations of the Lord, even though appearing in animal and fish forms, such as Matsya and Varāha, give pleasure to Their respective devotees. All the incarnations of the Lord are eternal and complete. This is the unflinching conviction of Śrī Agradēva. May the garland of these twenty-four incarnations decorate my heart, just like a necklace.

❁ Text 6 ❁

There are twenty-two symbols marking the lotus feet of Lord Rāmacandra, the valiant hero of the Raghu dynasty. They are an anchor, cloth, thunderbolt, lotus, barely, flag, cow's hoofprint, conchshell, cakṛa, svastika, jambu fruit, pitcher, lake of nectar, half moon, hexagon, fish, dot, line going upwards, octagon, triangle, rainbow, and male person. These wonderful markings found on the lotus feet of Lord Rāmacandra are very auspicious for the devotees.

❁ Commentary ❁

To assist the devotees and give them the pleasure of meditating on His lotus feet, Lord Rāmacandra, the king of kings, has accepted these symbols. Since the mad elephant of the mind cannot be controlled, the Lord has accepted the symbol of an anchor. To conquer the mind, one should meditate on the anchor on the lotus feet of the Lord. Since the material conception of bodily identification gives trouble to the devotees, the Lord has accepted the symbol of cloth to remove their lamentations. The devotees can meditate on this symbol and feel joyful. To destroy the mountain of sin within the hearts of the devotees, the Lord has accepted the symbol of a thunderbolt. To award the nectar of loving devotional service, the Lord has accepted the symbol of a lotus. The devotees should meditate on these auspicious symbols on the soles of the Lord's lotus feet.

Meditation on the symbol of barley awards the devotees knowledge and perfection. It is the source of good intelligence, awards the highest destination, and brings spiritual happiness. Those who meditate on this symbol attain these benedictions.

The devotees generally become fearful while witnessing the crooked movements of the age of Kali. Just to award them fearlessness, the Lord has accepted the sign of a flag on the soles of His lotus feet. If the devotees meditate on the symbol of a cow's hoofprint, they will feel that the insurmountable ocean of material existence

has become as small as the water in a calf's hoofprint. The Lord has accepted the symbol of a conchshell to remove the illusion of *māyā*, and to conquer her influence. By meditating on this symbol, the devotees can easily conquer the influence of the illusory energy, *māyā*.

To subdue the nocturnal animals in the form of lust, the Lord accepted the symbol of a *cakra* on His lotus feet. The Lord accepted the svastika symbol on the soles of His lotus feet to bring auspiciousness to the devotees who meditate upon them. The Lord accepted the symbol of a jambu fruit to fulfill all the desires of His devotees, including those pertaining to religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation. The devotees should always meditate on this symbol to achieve the fulfillment of their desires.

The Lord accepted the symbol of a pitcher and a pot of nectar, enabling the hearts of His devotees who meditate on them to be filled with the mellows of devotional service. The devotees should always drink this nectar from the bowl of their eyes and thus become immortal. The Lord accepted the symbol of a half moon to destroy the three kinds of material miseries and increase the devotees' love for Him.

The snakes in the form of lust generally reside in the holes of the body. So that the snakes do not bite the devotees, the merciful Lord has accepted the symbol of a hexagon, octagon, and triangle on the soles of His lotus feet. Those who meditate on these auspicious

symbols are relieved from the fear of snakes in the form of sense gratification.

Lord Rāmacandra accepted the symbols of a fish and a dot on the soles of His lotus feet as a device to attract the minds of His devotees. The ocean of material existence is unlimited and no one can cross beyond it. Therefore the Lord has created a bridge by accepting the symbol of a line pointing upwards, thus enabling the devotees to easily cross the ocean of material existence.

Lord Rāmacandra accepted the symbol of a rainbow on the soles of His lotus feet in order to minimize the distresses of His devotees. It is a well-known fact that the Lord has subdued the pride of many demons, headed by Rāvaṇa, with the help of His bow. The Lord accepted the symbol of a male person indicating that if a devotee is straightforward, ever-truthful, and engages in devotional service, He will keep him under the shade of His lotus feet. Those who are intelligent and know the science of devotional service should meditate on these auspicious symbols and chant the holy names of the Lord.

❀ Text 7 ❀

Lord Brahmā, Nārada Muni, Lord Śiva, the four kumāras headed by Sanaka, Lord Kapila, Prajāpati Manu, Prahlāda Mahārāja, King Janaka, Grandfather Bhiṣma, Bali Mahārāja, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and Yamarāja—these are the twelve confidential servants of

the Supreme Lord in this world. One who hears about and glorifies these twelve great personalities will always experience auspiciousness in their lives. Such hearing and chanting is highly beneficial, both for the speakers and the listeners. The names of these personalities were mentioned by Yamarāja as he was instructing his messengers in connection with the story of Ajāmila. These twelve personalities are the principal devotees of the Supreme Lord.

❀ Commentary ❀

Lord Brahmā was born from the lotus flower that sprouted from the navel of Lord Viṣṇu as He was lying in the Garbhodaka Ocean. At first, Brahmā could not see anything, and so he turned his face in the four directions. It is for this reason that he has four heads.

As Brahmā tried to find out his source, he went down the stem of the lotus, but he still could not find anything and so he became depressed. Then he suddenly heard a voice in the sky, vibrating the two syllables *ta pa*. Thereafter, Lord Brahmā performed severe austerities, and as a result, the Lord appeared before him, granting him spiritual knowledge, engagement in His devotional service, and the ability to recreate the universe as it was previously.

Lord Brahmā imparted to the sages, headed by Nārada, the transcendental knowledge he had received from the Lord. He is a great devotee and a benefactor of

all living entities. From time to time, by his appeal, the Supreme Lord incarnates into this world.

While describing his mental condition, Lord Brahmā once said, “My dear Nārada, I am continually absorbed in thought of the Supreme Personality of Godhead with feelings of love and devotion. Because of this, my words can never prove false. My mind never deviates from the truth, and my senses never indulge in sinful activities, thus violating the prescribed codes of conduct. To surrender unto the Supreme Lord is the essence of *bhāgavata-dharma*. Up until one takes shelter of the Lord’s lotus feet, which award fearlessness, one is sure to be disturbed by fear, lamentation, greed, poverty, and so many other miseries. Indeed, lack of surrender to the Supreme Lord is the cause of everyone’s suffering. Therefore one who eagerly awaits the Lord’s mercy, at every movement, while enjoying the fruits of his *karma*, both good and bad, and fully surrenders his body, mind, and speech at the lotus of the Lord is certainly a qualified candidate for liberation.”

❀ Nārada Muni ❀

The great sage Nārada appeared from the lap of Lord Brahmā. In a previous life, Nārada was a Gandharva named Upabarhaṇa. When he was summoned to sing the glories of Lord Hari in Brahmaloka, he brought with him many celestial women.

Seeing this lusty behavior, Brahmā cursed Upabarhaṇa to take birth as the son of a maidservant.

As the son of a maidservant, Nārada was decorated with all divine qualities from his very childhood. While describing this to Vedavyāsa, Nārada said, “Once, some self-realized souls came to stay near my residence for the duration of the four-month rainy season, to observe the vow of *cāturmāsyā*. I had ample opportunity to serve those great souls and honor the remnants of their food. I also had the good fortune of hearing discussions of the Supreme Lord’s pastimes and transcendental qualities from their mouths. As a result, my heart became purified of all contamination.

“One evening, while returning home after milking the cow, my mother was bitten by a snake and died. Thereafter, taking full shelter of the Supreme Lord, I left for the forest, traveling to the North. I practiced meditation according to the instructions of those great souls, and the Lord appeared within my heart. When I began searching for the Lord whom I had seen within my heart, I was given the assurance that I would have His association if I engaged in the cultivation of devotional service.

“Thereafter, I wandered about here and there, singing the transcendental glories of the Supreme Lord, and in due course of time, I gave up my body. In the next *kalpa*, I was born as the son of Brahmā.

“O Vyāsadeva, whenever I sing the glories of the Lord while playing my *vīṇā*, the

Supreme Lord immediately appears within my heart.”

Nārada instructed the *catuḥślokī bhāgavatam* to Vyāsadeva, who was dissatisfied even after compiling the *Vedas* and seventeen *Purāṇas*. Thereafter, Vyāsadeva compiled the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Nārada Muni instructed Prahlāda when he was within the womb of his mother, and he also instructed Dhruva as he was going to the forest, thus transforming them into exalted devotees. He instructed the ten thousand sons of Prajāpati Dakṣa known as the Haryaśvas, and awarded them detachment from materialistic life.

Dakṣa next begot one thousand more sons and sent them off to perform austerities so that they would be able to create progeny. Nārada Muni again instructed these sons of Dakṣa, turning them into renunciates. As a result, Dakṣa became angry and cursed Nārada that he would not be able to stay in any one place for more than two hours. Because of his saintly nature, Nārada Muni gladly accepted this curse.

Nārada is a sage among the demigods, and he is the principal ācārya of *Vedānta*, yoga, astrology, music, and above all, devotional service. He made a promise to Bhakti-devī in Vṛndāvana, saying, “If I am a true servant of Lord Hari then I will establish devotional service in each and every house.” Being pleased with Nārada Muni, Bhakti-devī said, “Since you have love and affection for me, I will always reside in your heart.”

❁ Lord Śiva ❁

As Gaṅgā is the best of all rivers, as Lord Acyuta is the best of all demigods, and as Śrīmad-*Bhāgavatam* is the best of all *Purāṇas*, Lord Śiva is the best of all Vaiṣṇavas. Lord Śiva is the merchant of devotional service. He chants the holy names of Lord Rāma throughout the entire day and night. By the power of the holy name, Lord Śiva bestows liberation to all those who die at Kāśī.

Lord Śiva is the easiest to please among all the demigods. He drank the deadly poison that was produced from the churning of the ocean of milk, and thus he relieved the distress of the demigods. By the influence of the Lord's holy name, the poison turned into nectar. Lord Śiva is the embodiment of faith and devotion for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He continually experiences the ecstasy of being absorbed in meditation upon the Lord's pastimes. It is his conviction that rendering service to the Supreme Lord with love and devotion is the only means for attaining His grace. He considers himself to be a devoted servant of his worshipable Lord. Lord Śiva narrated the pastimes of Lord Rāmacandra to his wife, Pārvatī.

These twelve celebrated devotees are described in many *Purāṇas*, including Śrīmad-*Bhāgavatam*, but there is something very confidential about Lord Śiva that is rarely discussed. Lord Rāmacandra was overwhelmed by lamentation in separation from Sītā after Her abduction, while roaming from forest to forest. Seeing His condition,

Satī said to Lord Śiva, who is highly experienced in relishing loving exchanges, "Look at Lord Rāma! What kind of God is He? Just see how He has become almost mad due to separation from Sītā."

Lord Śiva said, "This is one of the Lord's pastimes while playing the part of a human being." Still, Satī could not understand the true nature of the Lord's condition and so, in spite of Lord Śiva's forbidding her, she went to test Him.

Satī assumed the form of Sītā and dressed herself in exactly the same way. Although Lord Rāma saw her, He did not for a moment think that she was Sītā, but rather knew that it was Satī.

Thereafter, Satī returned and explained everything to Lord Śiva. Lord Śiva was sad to hear this. He explained to Satī, "You assumed the form of my worshipable goddess and so I can no longer accept you as my wife in this form." After hearing this, Satī became fearful and aggrieved and so she gave up her body and again took birth as the daughter of the King of the Himālayas so that she could rejoin her husband. This is an indication of Lord Śiva's devotional mood for his worshipable Lord.

Because I have a special liking for Lord Śiva, I have narrated this pastime. Once, as Lord Śaṅkara was wandering about the earth, along with goddess Pārvatī, they saw two forts in a deserted village. Lord Śiva got down from his carrier, Nandī, and offered his obsequences to them. Pārvatī said, "My lord, who did you offer obsequences to? I don't see

any demigods or sages here.”

Lord Śiva replied, “A great devotee of the Lord used to live in the first fort about ten thousand years ago. And about the second fort; another great devotee will appear and reside there after ten thousand years. That is why both of these places are worshipable.”

Hearing about the greatness of devotees from her husband, Pārvati’s heart became filled with love and devotion for them, so much so that her feelings are not possible for me to properly describe.

❀ The four Kumāras ❀

The names of the four kumāras are Sanaka, Sananda, Sanat-kumāra, and Sanātana. These four Kumāras are the ācāryas of the four authorized *sampradāyas*. These four sons of Brahmā were great mystic *yogīs* and learned scholars. Although they were the oldest of all the forefathers, they looked just like five-year-old boys. They eternally reside in Vaikuṇṭha, where they sing the glories of the Lord and relish His pastimes. Glorifying the Lord is their only goal of life. Because of their powerful *bhajana*, they never grow old. Their *darśana* is very auspicious and awards one transcendental peace. They always drink the nectar of the Lord’s glorification, heard from the thousand mouths of Ananta-śeṣa. When not hearing from Ananta-śeṣa, one of the Kumāras becomes the speaker and the others listen as he glorifies the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Once, the four Kumāras went to Vaikuṇṭha to have the *darśana* of Lord Nārāyaṇa. By the inspiration of the Lord, they were stopped at the gate by the gatekeepers, Jaya and Vijaya. This angered the four young boys, who then cursed the two gatekeepers to become demons in the material world.

Thereafter, Jaya and Vijaya had to take birth as Hiraṇyākṣa and Hiraṇyakaśipu, then as Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarna, and finally as Śiṣupāla and Dantavakra. It was the Lord’s pastime to kill them so that they would be delivered from material existence. The devotees are always prepared to serve the Lord in whichever way He desires. For a pure devotee, heaven and hell are the same as long as they are engaged in the service of the Lord. Thus Jaya and Vijaya gladly accepted demonic natures just to satisfy the Supreme Lord’s desire to fight.

❀ Śrī Kapiladeva ❀

Lord Kapila appeared as the son of sage Kardama Muni and Devahūti. Lord Kapila instructed His mother at great length about the execution of devotional service. According to Lord Kapila, attachment to the devotees of the Lord is the only means for becoming liberated from the bondage of material existence. Attachment to worldly opulence and sense gratification is the cause of bondage, but attachment to pure devotees is the cause of liberation. Those who are tolerant, compassionate, and who are the

benefactors of all living entities, and who are peaceful, straight forward, and respectful to saintly persons, and who render loving service to the Supreme Lord while giving up all material activities and materialistic associates, and who regularly hear and chant the Lord's glories, having fixed their minds on the Supreme, are never disturbed by the miseries of material existence.

❁ Prajāpati Manu ❁

Svāyambhuva Manu and his wife, Śatarūpā, are the original progenitors of mankind. Their glories are described in the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas*. The renowned *Manu-smṛiti* literature guides mankind to walk on the path of righteousness even today. Svāyambhuva Manu is one of the twelve *mahājanas*.

❁ Prahlāda Mahārāja ❁

Prahlāda Mahārāja was the son of Hiraṇyakaśipu and an exalted devotee of the Supreme Lord. When he was a young boy, he instructed his schoolmates, revealing to them the truth of spiritual life. According to him, human beings should start worshipping the Supreme Lord from their childhood because the material body is temporary and perishable. His glories will be described later in this book.

❁ King Janaka ❁

King Janaka was produced from the churning of the body of King Nimi. Since he was born without a father, he became known as Janaka. He was a great devotee of the Lord and is one of the twelve *mahājanas*. In his dynasty appeared a great king named Śiradhvaja Janaka, whose daughter was Jānakī, or Sītā. Her marriage with Lord Rāma was made possible by Her holding a *svayamvara*. Śukadeva Gosvāmī once approached King Janaka to learn the science of self-realization. Many learned scholars and transcendentalists sat in his royal assembly.

❁ Grandfather Bhīṣma ❁

Because they had kidnapped the *kāmadhenu*, Nandinī, sage Vaśiṣṭha cursed the eight Vasus, the sons of Dharma, to take birth as human beings. For their deliverance, mother Gaṅgā agreed to become Śāntanu's wife on the condition that whatever she might do, no one must stop her. Gaṅgādevī gave birth to seven children, one after another, and threw them into the water of the Gaṅgā. The eighth Vasu, named Dyū, who had kidnapped Nandinī, took birth as Devavrata. When Śāntanu stopped Gaṅgā from throwing the child into the water, she disappeared, for that was the condition imposed by her.

Later on, Śāntanu became attracted to a fisherman's daughter named Satyavatī. The father was willing to give his daughter in marriage to Śāntanu, but only on the condition that her son would be the heir to the royal throne. The king did not agree to this, but the result was that he became morose.

For the sake of his father, Devavrata took the great vow of remaining celibate throughout his entire life. For this reason Devavrata became known as Bhīṣma. Being pleased with his selfless sacrifice and dedication, his father gave him the benediction of being able to die at will. Bhīṣma mastered the art of the bow from Paraśurāma.

Once, Paraśurāma ordered Bhīṣma to marry Ambā, the daughter of Kāśirāja, but he refused, and as a result there was a fierce battle between the two. Still, Bhīṣma did not budge from his vow to remain celibate. Finally Paraśurāma had to be pacified by the demigods.

Bhīṣma was instrumental in forcing Lord Kṛṣṇa to pick up a weapon during the battle at Kurukṣetra, even though He had promised not to do so. The Supreme Lord broke His promise just to uphold the promise He had made to Arjuna that His devotee would never be vanquished.

Bhīṣma gave many valuable instructions to the Pāṇḍavas, headed by Yudhiṣṭhira, while lying on a bed of arrows after the battle at Kurukṣetra. Finally, when the sun traveled to the northern hemisphere, Bhīṣma left his

body of his own free will and went to the abode of the Supreme Lord.

❀ Bali Mahārāja ❀

Supremely charitable Bali Mahārāja, was the son of Virocana and his wife, Surocanā. Virocana was the son of Prahlaḍa Mahārāja. Even after offering everything to Vāmanadeva, he was chastised by the Lord. He then said, "O best of the demigods, if You think that my words are untrue then I am ready to prove them to be true. Kindly place Your third step upon my head. I am not afraid of going to hell or being arrested with the ropes of Varuṇa. Rather, I am afraid of speaking untruthfully." Bali Mahārāja's glories will be described later in this book.

❀ Śukadeva Gosvāmī ❀

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī was the son of Vyāsadeva. He was not only a highly knowledgeable personality, but also a great devotee of the Lord. He recited Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to Mahārāja Parikṣit, revealing to him the confidential understanding of *bhāgavata-dharma*. His glories will be described later in this book.

❀ **Yamarāja** ❀

Yamarāja appeared as the son of Sūrya and his wife, Saṁjñā. He is very attractive to pious persons and very fearful for those who are sinful. He purifies the sinful living entities by awarding them just punishment.

❀ **Śrī Ajāmila** ❀

His father gave him the name Ajāmila, and he made it appropriate by *mila*, or “meeting” with *ajā*, or *māyā*. He left his legitimate wife, who belonged to a *brāhmaṇa* family and began drinking wine. Indeed, he stopped observing all the codes of proper conduct, and as a result he lost all good sense. He soon became a very sinful man.

By the arrangement of Providence, some saintly persons once arrived at his village. As a joke, some of the villagers told them that they should go to Ajāmila’s house, for he was also a saintly person. The saintly persons went there and when Ajāmila saw them, he had a change of heart. He dutifully served the devotees and satisfied them in all respects. As the devotees were about to leave, Ajāmila and his wife offered their obsequies. The saintly persons blessed them, saying, “Your wife will give birth to a boy and you should name him Nārāyaṇa.” In due course of time, a son was born and Ajāmila named him Nārāyaṇa.

Ajāmila was completely entangled in the

network of illusion due to attachment for his wife and children. In this way he approached the end of his life. At the time of death, Ajāmila saw fierce-looking Yamadūtas before him. In this fearful and helpless condition, Ajāmila called out the name of his loving young son whom he had named Nārāyaṇa. Immediately, the associates of Lord Viṣṇu arrived upon the scene and untied the noose with which the Yamadūtas had bound Ajāmila.

When challenged by the Yamadūtas, the Viṣṇudūtas explained the confidential truths of *dharma*, religious principles. Still, the Yamadūtas were not convinced and so, considering Ajāmila to be a sinful person, they tried to take him away. However, the Viṣṇudūtas chastised them and drove them away. Being defeated and humiliated by the Viṣṇudūtas, the Yamadūtas approached their master, Dharmarāja, and inquired from him about the cause of their defeat.

In reply Yamarāja said, “Foolish servants, may you be struck with thunderbolts, for you have committed a grave offence. From now on be careful. If anyone is chanting the Lord’s holy names, do not even go near him. For your own benefit, you should also chant the holy names of Lord Hari and glorify Him.”

❀ **Text 8** ❀

May my mind always dwell in that place where the confidential associates

of Lord Nārāyaṇa reside. The Lord's associates, headed by Viṣvaksena, Jaya, Vijaya, Prabala, and Bala always engage in working for the welfare of the devotees. Nanda, Sunanda, Subhadra, and Bhadra cure all of one's material diseases. Caṇḍa, Pracaṇḍa, Kumuda, and Kumudākṣa are very submissive and merciful. Śīla, Suśīla, and Suṣena are the maintainers of exalted devotees. These sixteen associates are very expert in pleasing Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa by rendering service unto Them. They are the well-wishers of the devotees who take pleasure in serving the Lord.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Nābhā has given the names of the sixteen principal associates of Lord Nārāyaṇa. These associates are eternally perfect and eternally liberated. They are enriched with the unlimited opulence derived from direct service to the Supreme Lord. They are expert in satisfying Lord Nārāyaṇa, the husband of Lakṣmī. They are constantly absorbed in meditation on the Supreme Lord, and they maintain the devotees by their merciful glances.

The Lord inspired the four sons of Brahmā, headed by Sanaka, to curse His doorkeepers, Jaya and Vijaya, to take birth as demons. Thereafter, the Lord appeared and declared that the curse was actually His own doing. After hearing this, Jaya and Vijaya accepted the curse as if they were drinking nectar and said, "If You are pleased with this

arrangement, we are happy to become Your enemies, thus giving up Your personal service." Such is the unique mood in which Jaya and Vijaya perform their service to the Lord. Indeed, their mode of worship is said to exhibit the limit of devotion.

❀ Text 9 ❀

The sixteen associates of the Lord headed by Śrī Lakṣmī, Garuḍa, and Sunanda, as well as Hanumān, Jāmbavān, Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa, Śabari; Jaṭāyu, the king of birds; Dhruva, Uddhava, Ambariṣa, Vidura, Akrūra, Sudāmā, Candrahāsa, Citraketu; Gajendra, who was attacked by a crocodile; the five Pāṇḍavas—Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva—Maitreya, Queen Kuntī, and Draupadī, whose chastity was protected by Kṛṣṇa, all have unflinching love and devotion for the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I offer my obeisances at the lotus feet of all these dear devotees of the Lord. I have a great desire to smear the dust from their feet upon my head.

❀ Commentary ❀

The dear devotees of the Lord are rarely found within the fourteen worlds. I have a desire to receive the dust from their feet. I have no interest in the masters of mystic yoga, or renunciates and ascetics who are devoid of

devotion for the Lord. The devotees' faith, devotion, and methods of worship have captivated my intelligence, which directs me towards them. The nectarean glorification of Lakṣmī, Garuḍa, Jāmbavān, and Sugrīva are found in the *Purāṇas* and others literatures. The sweet narrations of the characteristics of those devotees who sincerely serve the Lord, and who have spread the glories of the Lord throughout the world, are very dear to me. Simply by hearing and chanting these narrations, the heart becomes pacified.

❀ Śrī Lakṣmī ❀

Whenever the omniscient Lord appears in the material world to perform His transcendental pastimes, His internal energy appears with Him to assist Him. When the Lord appeared as Rāmacandra, His internal energy appeared as Sitā, when He appeared as Kṛṣṇa, His internal energy appeared as Rādhā, and when the Lord appeared as Viṣṇu, His internal energy appeared as Lakṣmī. Being the father of the universe, the Lord sometimes displays anger for the benefit of the conditioned souls, but Lakṣmī, being the mother of the universe, is always affectionate to the devotees and forgives them when there is some fault. On many occasions She forgave the devotees, even though they committed great offences. Who can properly understand the affectionate nature of the mother of the demigods? She is sometimes called the daughter of the ocean

because She appeared when the demigods and demons churned the ocean of milk to produce nectar. She eternally resides by the side of Her Lord, Nārāyaṇa, and serves His lotus feet.

❀ Śrī Garuḍa ❀

Śrī Garuḍa was the son of Vinatā, one of the wives of the sage, Kaśyapa. He received a benediction from Sūrya that he would have a complete understanding of Vedic wisdom, and that when he flapped his wings, the hymns of the Sāma-veda would be vibrated. Mighty Garuḍa is an expansion of Lord Ananta. He is also considered to be a *vibhuti*, or opulence, of the Supreme Lord.

When the demigods and demons churned the ocean of milk, many invaluable jewels appeared. Rāvaṇa snatched up all these jewels after defeating everyone who opposed him. His brother, Vibhīṣana, joyfully prepared a wonderful necklace with those jewels. At the time of Lord Rāma's coronation ceremony, Vibhīṣana offered that necklace to Him with undivided love and devotion. When they saw it, all the members of the assembly desired to possess that necklace, but Lord Rāma gave it to Hanumān.

Hanumān was always absorbed in thoughts of how to best serve the Lord's lotus feet. By the touch of the necklace, he became bewildered, thinking, "What is the use of such a necklace if there are no holy names of Lord Rāma inscribed on it?" He broke each and every jewel and when he found no name

of Rāma inside, he threw them all away.

When asked about this rash act, Hanumān replied, "What is the use of a necklace which is devoid of Rāma's holy name?" Hearing this, Vibhīṣaṇa inquired, "Where is the name of Rāma in the body which you possess?" At this, Hanumān peeled off layers of his skin, thus revealing to Vibhīṣaṇa the holy name of Lord Rāma. Seeing this, everyone was truly astonished.

❀ Śrī Jāmbavān ❀

It is said that for the purpose of serving the Supreme Lord, Brahmā appeared as Jāmbavān. Jāmbavān played an important role in the pastimes of Lord Rāmacandra by carrying out the responsibilities of a minister. He had sharp intelligence, and was very powerful. In Dvāpara-yuga, he gave his daughter, Jāmvavatī, in marriage to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, offering Him the famous Syamantaka jewel as dowry. Indeed, Jāmbavān has had the *darśana* of the Lord in many of His incarnations.

❀ Śrī Sugrīva ❀

Śrī Sugrīva was born from a plenary portion of the sun-god, Sūrya. Since his brother, Vālī, became inimical to him because of a demon and forcibly took away his wife and wealth and drove him out of the kingdom, Sugrīva resided with Hanumān in the Kīṣkīṇḍhā Mountains. He met Lord Rāma through

Hanumān and established friendship with Him. Sugrīva dedicated his entire life to the service of the Lord, and to reciprocate, Lord Rāmacandra treated him just like His fifth brother.

❀ Śrī Vibhīṣaṇa ❀

Śrī Vibhīṣaṇa was born as the son of Kaikasī and Viśravā, the son of the sage, Pulastya. Vibhīṣaṇa underwent great penance and begged for the Lord's service. His wife, Saramā, was a chaste woman. He rendered much service to Sitā while She resided in the *aśoka* grove. While in Laṅkā, he engaged in the service of the Lord, and later on he joined Lord Rāma and served Him for rest of his life. Lord Rāma treated him as His friend and made him a minister. Vibhīṣaṇa assisted Lord Rāma when He fought with Rāvaṇa. The Lord gave Vibhīṣaṇa His family Deity, Śrī Raṅga, when He bade him farewell. Even today, this Deity, Śrī Raṅganātha, is worshiped in South India.

Who is the learned poet who could adequately describe the devotion of Vibhīṣaṇa? Still, whatever is possible is being described by me. Please hear me with attention.

Once, a ship sailing the sea somehow or other got stuck. After trying very hard, when the ship still did not move, the captain thought that the ocean-god must be pacified with some kind of gift. For this purpose, he threw a weak and lame man into the water as an offering of sacrifice. And yet, the

man did not die, and with the help of the waves, he reached the shore at Laṅkā. The Rākṣasas picked him up and happily brought him before the king. When Vibhīṣaṇa saw the man, he hastily jumped down from his throne, his eyes filled with tears. He said, “Lord Rāmacandra was also once in such a forelorn and helpless condition. I am fortunate to be reminded of those heart-rending pastimes of the Lord.”

Vibhīṣaṇa dressed the man nicely and decorated him with ornaments. He made him sit on the throne and respected him in so many ways. He also rewarded the Rākṣasas who brought him. In a joyful mood, Vibhīṣaṇa gazed at the lotus-like face of that man as tears began flowing from his eyes. As an order carrying servant, he stood in front of that man with a stick in his hand.

And yet, the man was still not satisfied, but rather looked pale and forelorn. Seeing this, Vibhīṣaṇa prayed to him, saying, “My dear sir, be kind to me. Tell me how I can serve you. I feel distraught to see you display this indifference.” The man replied, “Help me cross the ocean. This will make me very happy.” Vibhīṣaṇa gave him many jewels and then brought him to the seashore.

Vibhīṣaṇa wrote the holy name of Lord Rāma on that man’s head and said, “This name of Rāma will help you cross the ocean.” By the mercy of Vibhīṣaṇa, the man regained his faith and began to experience feelings of love. By the influence of the holy name of Rāma, his body was transformed into a celestial form. By the arrangement

of Providence, the same ship arrived there and the people on board recognized him as the man they had thrown overboard. When asked, the man described everything that had happened to him since that time. The people on board were very happy to hear the story and so they took him onboard as one of their fellow passengers.

Being greedy, a sailor tried to forcibly take away the man’s jewels, but he jumped into the water and began walking on it just as one walks on land. Indeed, the water did not even touch his feet. Seeing this miracle, all the people were greatly astonished, and it gave them great faith and respect for the holy name of Lord Rāma.

❁ The character of Śabari ❁

Śabari lived in the forest and had a great desire to serve saintly persons. But since she belonged to a low caste, she did not dare go near them. Every morning, well before sunrise, she would secretly go to the āśramas of the sages and leave bundles of dry wood. Indeed, she rendered this service with great satisfaction. Every morning she would get up early and sweep the road on which the saintly persons and others would walk. The sages would get up in the morning and discuss among themselves, saying, “Who sweeps this road every day? Who keeps this bundle of dry wood near our āśrama? There must be an advanced saintly person living nearby.”

Among those sages residing in the forest was a sage named Mataṅga. He was a highly renounced soul who relished the transcendental mellows of devotional service. Seeing a bundle of dry wood, the sage said, “Who is the thief who secretly comes to this forest to render service? We must catch him, for our minds will forever be restless until we have the *darśana* of that great devotee.”

Having received his order, Mataṅga’s disciples began guarding the area very carefully. Then, when Śabarī arrived there to leave a bundle of wood, those disciples caught her and brought her to their guru. The poor lady began to tremble out of fear, and then she fell at their feet. When Mataṅga saw Śabarī, his eyes became filled with tears, for he felt himself to be most fortunate to have seen her.

Thinking her body to be untouchable, Śabarī could not even raise her head to look at the sage. Sage Mataṅga wanted to reveal Śabarī’s wonderful glories, for he understood the incomparable influence of devotional service to the Supreme Lord. The sage told his disciples, “This woman devotee is so pure because of the strength of her devotional service that she surpasses even those who possess all brāhminical qualifications.”

Mataṅga gave Śabarī a small cottage in his āśrama and initiated her into the chanting of a Sitā-Rāma *mantra*. However, all the other sages in the forest became angry at Mataṅga and ostracized him from their community. This did not bother Mataṅga,

however, but instead made him pleased. Ultimately, Mataṅga attained perfection in the performance of his austerities, and at that time, he said to Śabarī, “By the order of the Lord, I am going to His abode. Remain in this āśrama and perform your *bhajana*. Here you will have the *darśana* of Lord Rāmacandra.”

Separation from Mataṅga put Śabarī into a state of bereavement. Indeed, she no longer wished to continue living, but she continued to do so just so she would have the *darśana* of her beloved Lord Rāmacandra as indicated by her spiritual master. Meanwhile, she continued sweeping the road that the sages traversed while going for their morning bath.

One day, Śabarī was late for performing this service. Seeing the sages walking on the unswept road gave her great pain. The road was narrow and so by mistake a sage happened to touch her while passing by. That sage became very angry and began chastising Śabarī so that she ran back to her cottage. The sage thought for a moment and then went to take another bath. As soon as he entered the lake, the water transformed into a pool of blood, filled with countless insects. It was because the sage had considered himself to be contaminated by the touch of a devotee that the water of the lake had transformed in that way. But the unfortunate sage who had committed that grievous offence did not understand the truth of this mystery. Instead, he thought that the water had become polluted by Śabarī’s touch.

Śabarī was ever anxious while awaiting the

arrival of Lord Rāmacandra. Every day she would collect berries from the forest, and after tasting them, she would keep only the sweetest ones for her worshipable Lord. Out of intense eagerness, she would often stand on the road, awaiting the Lord's arrival, keeping it clean and free from sharp pebbles. In this way she would patiently await the arrival of the Lord of the Raghu dynasty.

Śabarī would lament, "When will my eyes relish the nectar of Lord Rāmacandra's beauty?" In this way, she spent her days in the forest. Then one day, Lord Rāmacandra suddenly arrived at Śabarī's cottage so that all of her lamentation vanished. But still, the fact that her body had been born in a low family remained in her mind so that out of embarrassment, she run away and hid. Lord Rāmacandra inquired, "Where is Śabarī? Where is Śabarī?" All the sages residing there were astonished to see how Śabarī was hiding, and how the Lord was inquiring about her.

Lord Rāmacandra had inquired about Śabarī from the local inhabitants and had finally arrived at her āśrama. But the Lord could not see her there and so He wondered where she had gone. Indeed, His eyes were thirsty to see His dear devotee. Meanwhile, when Śabarī learned that her worshipable Lord has arrived at her cottage and was awaiting her arrival, she ran back to her āśrama. From a distance, Śabarī offered her respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of Lord Rāma. Seeing Him in the distance, her eyes blossomed with joy. The Lord went to

her and picked her up so that simply by the touch of the His lotus hand, all of her pains and distresses vanished. Tears of love began flowing from her eyes.

Thereafter, Lord Rāmacandra sat comfortably on an *āsana* while Śabarī offered the sweet berries which she had kept for Him. The Lord relished the berries and repeatedly praised their sweet taste. He said, "What can I say? After eating these sweet berries offered with love and devotion, all My distress and fatigue have vanished."

Some time before that, all the sages in the area had assembled to discuss an important matter. They said, "The water of the lake has become polluted. To purify the water, we have performed a fire sacrifice, poured water from holy rivers into it, and have performed many other such acts, but still it has not become purified. What should we do to purify the water?"

All the sages concluded that when they met Lord Rāmacandra as He made His way through the forest, they would ask Him for advice about how the water of the lake could be purified. Just then the sages heard that Lord Rāmacandra had arrived at Śabarī's āśrama. This news smashed the pride of the sages, who thought of themselves as being superior because of their being *brāhmaṇas*. They hurried to Śabarī's āśrama and offered their obeisances to Lord Rāma.

Being somewhat crestfallen, the sages said, "O Lord Śrī Rāma, kindly tell us the means for purifying the water of our lake." The Supreme Lord replied, "Go and fall down at

Śabari's feet and then wash her feet with the water of the lake. If you do this, the water of the lake will become purified." The sages did just as the Lord had commanded and as a result, the water of the lake became clear and pure. By witnessing the glories of devotional service and the devotees, the hearts of the sages melted with love and devotion.

❀ Jāṭāyu ❀

After Rāvaṇa had kidnapped Sitā, which paved the way for him to be killed by Lord Rāmacandra, when Jāṭāyu, the king of the birds, heard Her pathetic cries for help, he quickly came to Her rescue. He fiercely fought with Rāvaṇa and ultimately sacrificed his life. However, he did not immediately give up his mortal body, for he had an intense desire to meet his worshipable Lord, Śrī Rāma.

While searching for Jānakī, Lord Rāmacandra arrived at where Jāṭāyu was lying mortally wounded and placed his head upon His lap. Seeing Jāṭāyu's condition, the Lord felt so aggrieved that tears flowed from His eyes. Indeed, Jāṭāyu's entire body became soaked with the Lord's tears. Jāṭāyu informed Śrī Rāma of the news of Rāvaṇa's kidnapping Sitā, and he attained the highest destination, which is only awarded to pure devotees. Lord Rāmacandra personally performed Jāṭāyu's funeral ceremony. The Lord treated Jāṭāyu just as He did His father, Daśaratha, and so He respectfully offered

him oblations of water. In the end, Jāṭāyu received a transcendental four-armed form after returning to Vaikuṇṭha.

❀ Śrī Dhruva ❀

Svāyambhuva Manu had a son named Uttānapāda, who had two wives named Sunīti and Suruci. Sunīti has a son named Dhruva, and Suruci had a son named Uttama. The king had special affection for his younger queen, Suruci.

Once, Dhruva wanted to sit on the lap of his father, but the younger queen stopped him, saying, "First you should perform austerities so that you can take birth from my womb. Only then will you be able to sit on the lap of your father."

After hearing these harsh words, Dhruva set out for Madhuvana to perform austerities. His mother, Sunīti, had advised him to worship the Supreme Lord, and she profusely blessed him. On his way to Madhuvana, Dhruva met the great sage, Nārada Muni, who instructed him how to approach the Supreme Lord. Dhruva followed the path of devotional service as instructed by his spiritual master, Nārada, and within five months he attained the perfection of meeting the Supreme Lord face to face. The Lord awarded Dhruva the rule of his kingdom for thirty-six thousand years. When he returned home from the forest, everyone greeted him with great pomp.

Dhruva's elder brother, Uttama, was killed by the Yakṣas and so he attacked them to gain revenge and defeated them all. After enjoying his earthly kingdom for thirty-six thousand years, Dhruva handed it over to his son, Utkala, and went to Badarikāśrama to reside on the shore of the Gaṅgā. Finally, he left this world and attained Vaikuṇṭha.

❁ Śrī Uddhava ❁

Śrī Uddhava was a prominent personality in the Vṛṣṇī dynasty, a disciple of Bṛhaspati, and supremely intelligent. He was Śrī Kṛṣṇa's friend and minister. Sri Kṛṣṇa once said, "O Uddhava, you are so dear to Me that even My son, Brahmā; My very soul, Śiva; My brother, Balarāma; My wife, Lakṣmī; and My very self are not so dear as you. Kṛṣṇa and Uddhava were intimate friends. Śrī Kṛṣṇa sent Uddhava to Vraja so that he could understand the depth of the *gopīs'* pure love for Him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa instructed Uddhava in the science of the Absolute Truth, and those teachings are known as *Uddhava-gītā*.

❁ King Ambarīṣa ❁

If someone were to compete with the sage amongst kings, Ambarīṣa, out of envy, he would certainly be a mad fool because no one can ascertain the limit of his devotional service. The glories of Mahārāja Ambarīṣa's

devotion for the Supreme Personality of Godhead are impossible for any mortal to adequately describe. The anger manifested by the sage, Durvāsā, was previously unheard of. It is not profitable to compete with, or display arrogance, toward a devotee. The sage forgot this essential truth. He considered Mahārāja Ambarīṣa to be an offender and thus became unnecessarily angry with him.

Durvāsā Muni tore a lock of hair from his head and smashed it onto the ground. As a result, a fierce witch appeared, and the sage instructed her to burn Mahārāja Ambarīṣa to ashes. She approached Mahārāja Ambarīṣa, but the king was not at all afraid because he possessed unshakable forbearance. Rather, he stood up with folded hands, hoping to gratify the sage.

The Lord's Sudarśana *cakra* was always prepared to protect Mahārāja Ambarīṣa and his kingdom, and so it came and burnt the fiery witch to ashes. Thereafter, the *cakra* chased Durvāsā Muni, who thus became afraid for his life, all over the universe. This story is elaborately described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Durvāsā Muni fled in all directions out of fear of the Sudarśana *cakra*. He went to many planets and approached their presiding deities, but none could give him protection. The unbearable heat of the *cakra* was increasing at every moment as it to burn the sage to ashes. Durvāsā Muni then went to Brahmā and Śiva, and they also could not protect him, but rather said, "You

have a very bad habit of testing the devotees of the Lord. You have not understood their glories and the confidential nature of their positions.”

Finally, Durvāsā Muni ascended to Vaikuṇṭha, where he met Lord Nārāyaṇa. He appealed to the Lord, “Alas! O Lord! Please save me. Your *cakra* is burning the noble body of this *brāhmaṇa*. O Lord! You are the protector of the surrendered souls. You are the destroyer of the devotees’ distresses, and You are the benefactor of the *brāhmaṇas*. Because these are Your eternal qualities, I feel that I am eligible for Your protection. I surrender unto you.”

Lord Viṣṇu declared, “I am under the control of My devotees. I am not at all independent. My affection for My devotees is more important to Me than the qualities you have described. Indeed, this unique quality of Mine has eclipsed all other considerations.

“Devotees are very dear to Me because they have the utmost faith in Me and devotion for Me. You have offended My devotee and so how can I tolerate this? My devotees surrender unto Me by giving up their homes, wealth, lives, wives, and children. They fix their minds on Me throughout the entire day and night. They have nothing to do with the fruitive activities mentioned in the *Vedas*.

“For Me there is no other duty than to maintain and protect My devotees. This is a fact. Therefore you should go back and take shelter of Mahārāja Ambarīṣa. Only then will your distress be mitigated. My devotees

are very merciful. They always think of the welfare of others. Indeed, they are always engaged in working for the welfare of the fallen conditioned souls. Their limbs are forever engaged in My devotional service and so there is no scope for any fault or undesirable element in their bodies. Therefore you should go and surrender to Mahārāja Ambarīṣa.”

After hearing this, Durvāsā Muni returned to Mahārāja Ambarīṣa after leaving aside his pride. He fell down at the king’s lotus feet and begged for his pardon. The king felt embarrassed and offered due respect to the sage, speaking to him with words saturated with compassion.

Mahārāja Ambarīṣa folded his hands and appealed to the Sudarśana *cakra*, saying, “O mighty weapon of Lord Viṣṇu, the devotees are always free from all material desires. Still, I pray that you kindly mitigate this *brāhmaṇa*’s distress. He has certainly suffered enough.”

By the request of the king, and by seeing the pathetic condition of the *brāhmaṇa*, the Sudarśana *cakra*, who always gives pleasure to the devotees, felt compassion for the sage and withdrew his blazing energy.

After hearing the wonderful glories of Mahārāja Ambarīṣa, and His unparalleled devotion for the Supreme Lord, a princess desired to marry him. Having made up her mind in this way, she approached her father and said, “Dear father, please hear my appeal and then quickly send a letter to Mahārāja Ambarīṣa. I wish to have him and

no one else as my husband.”

The father wrote a letter expressing his daughter’s wish and sent it with a *brāhmaṇa*, who dutifully delivered it to the king. After reading the letter, Mahārāja Ambarīṣa said to the *brāhmaṇa*, “I have understood the innocent desire of the princess, but because I already have one hundred queens in my royal palace, how can I possibly accept her? My dear *brāhmaṇa*, I am engaged in the service of the Supreme Lord throughout the entire day and night. Please convey my decision to the princess.”

The *brāhmaṇa* returned and came before the princess. He said, “Though I went to the king and returned as quickly as possible, I am sad to tell you that he did not accept your proposal. Tell me if there is anything else I can do for you.”

The princess decided to once again send the *brāhmaṇa* to the king. She said, “I am very glad to learn that he refused my proposal. I can understand that he is a highly renounced and pious devotee, so that he has no attraction for enjoying life with women. Actually, it is his devotion for the Supreme Lord that has stolen my heart. I have already accepted him as my husband. I will never see the face of another man throughout my entire life.

“O exalted *brāhmaṇa*, go back to the king and convey this message to him. Also, tell the king that if he doesn’t accept me as his maidservant, he will incur the sin of killing a woman.”

The *brāhmaṇa* returned to Mahārāja

Ambarīṣa and explained to him the words spoken by the princess, and her precarious condition. Hearing about her love, admiration for his devotion, and her vow of lifelong chastity, Mahārāja Ambarīṣa was highly impressed and so he reversed his decision not to marry her. The king accepted the proposal of marriage and gave his sword to the *brāhmaṇa*, asking him to bring the ceremonial ring with it.

After marrying Mahārāja Ambarīṣa, the princess was fully satisfied as she continued residing at the city of her husband. Both Mahārāja Ambarīṣa and the newly-wed princess were most pleased to see each other’s devotional attitude. The king ordered his maidservants to arrange for a new palace for the princess, containing all the required items for material enjoyment and comfort. The King thought, “I must have engaged in the devotional service of the Lord in my previous life so that as a result this marriage took place.” Thinking like this, the king felt contented.

One day, the new queen entered the temple of the Supreme Lord that was situated within the palace of her husband and rendered service by cleansing and sweeping the temple room. She did this secretly and then returned to her palace. No one saw her come or go. When the king went to the temple after bathing to worship the Lord, he was surprised to see that this preliminary service had already been rendered. He observed everything very carefully and thought, “Who is the thief who came to steal the treasure of

my devotional service unto my worshipable Lord?”

This went on for three consecutive days, and on the fourth day, the king hidingly saw and recognized the thief, who was none other than his newly-wed queen. Mahārāja Ambarīṣa said to her, “If you have so much love and devotion for the Lord’s service, then take complete responsibility for serving Him. Build a temple in your own palace and invite the Lord to come. Then render service to Him twenty-four hours a day.”

The queen took the words of the king seriously, just as an obedient disciple accepts the *mantra* whispered into his ear by the spiritual master. Early the next morning, the queen installed a Deity of the Supreme Lord in her own palace and began serving Him according to the prescribed rules and regulations. Every day, the queen decorated the Deity very nicely and then gazed upon His enchanting beauty. In this way her loving service to the Lord increased, day by day.

Soon the news of the queen’s devotional service and lavish offerings spread throughout the city. When Mahārāja Ambarīṣa heard the news, he also desired to have *darśana* of the Lord. He quickly went to the temple of his queen, and so that she would not know of his arrival and thus be disturbed while chanting the Lord’s glories, and so that he could personally witness her loving devotional sentiments, he arrived unannounced.

The temple guard wanted to loudly glorify Mahārāja Ambarīṣa and announce his arrival

to the queen, but the king stopped him from doing so. The king waited patiently while, behind the closed door, the queen sang for the Lord with loving affection. Mahārāja Ambarīṣa was very eager to see this fortunate devotee with his own eyes. After a short while, he could not wait any longer and so he opened the temple door and went inside. Mahārāja Ambarīṣa saw that the queen was not even aware of her bodily condition because she was completely absorbed in ecstatic love for the Supreme Lord. Tears of love flowed from her eyes as she played a stringed instrument and sang the glories of the Lord.

Mahārāja Ambarīṣa was highly astonished. Considering himself to be most unfortunate, the king impatiently went before the queen. It was her practice that as soon as she saw her devoted husband, spiritual master, or the Supreme Lord, she would immediately stand up in a mood of awe and reverence.

Seeing that she was disturbed by his arrival, the king instructed her to continue her singing with musical accompaniment. He said, “I am highly impressed by observing your elevated position in devotional service. I cannot conceive of your absorption in devotional service. How can I hide the feelings of happiness that my ears, eyes, and mind experience while hearing your sweet chanting of the Lord’s glories?”

The queen picked up her stringed instrument and resumed singing with love and devotion. The beautiful form of the Lord appeared within her heart as the mellows

of ecstatic love filled her entire body. She continued to relish such transcendental ecstasy the entire night. Alas! The nature of such elevated love and devotion for the Lord is such that the devotee does not feel the need for sleeping, which manifests from the mode of ignorance.

When the co-wives heard that the king had personally gone to the palace of the new queen and spent the entire night listening to her singing the glories of the Lord, they discussed among themselves: "It appears that the new queen has emerged as the best of us all. There is no one who is as dear to the king as this new queen."

All the other queens decided to give up their attachment for sense enjoyment and engage in the service of the Supreme Lord so that they could also become very dear to their husband and thus attract his mercy. Coming to this conclusion, all the queens began serving the Lord with their bodies, minds, and wealth. When Mahārāja Ambarīṣa heard about this transformation of his queens, he was very pleased and went to the palaces of each and every one of them just to witness their loving sentiments while worshiping the Lord. Being inspired, all the inhabitants of the kingdom also began worshiping the Supreme Lord in their houses. As the result, devotional service to the Supreme Lord spread all over the kingdom and increased, day by day. Such is the powerful influence of devotional service to the Lord. By a devotee's influence, even materialistic people can change their ways

and thus experience true happiness, even in this life.

❁ Śrī Vidura ❁

Once, while Vidura's wife was taking a bath, Śrī Kṛṣṇa suddenly arrived and called her from outside the door. When she heard the sweet sound of Kṛṣṇa's voice, she forgot everything, so much so that she came out of the house without properly dressing. She felt great satisfaction when she saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was also very happy to see her and He offered His cā dara so that she could cover her body. Only then the devoted wife of Vidura came to her senses and quickly dressed herself properly.

Vidura's wife was certainly embarrassed when she came out again and sat down next to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa said, "My dear aunt, I am very hungry." She brought some bananas, but being intoxicated by love and affection for Kṛṣṇa, she fed Him the banana skins instead of the bananas. Lord Kṛṣṇa ate the banana skins out of love and affection for His devotee. Meanwhile, Vidura arrived there, and after seeing what was going on, he chastised his wife. When Vidura's wife realized her mistake, she felt even more embarrassed.

Vidura knew that his wife fed Kṛṣṇa banana skins due to her great love and affection for Him, and that the Lord accepted this offering out of love. Vidura began carefully taking off the skins and feeding Kṛṣṇa bananas.

This calmed his agitated mind.

Vidura said, “My dear Kṛṣṇa, my wife has given You trouble by feeding You banana skins.” The Lord cheerfully replied, “My dear uncle, you have pleased Me by feeding Me these bananas, but the taste that I relished from the banana skins was absent. I had never experienced such a wonderful taste before.”

Vidura’s wife was exceedingly embarrassed. She said to herself, “Alas! What should I do? Should I cut off the hands with which I fed Kṛṣṇa the banana skins? What does He think of me now? My foolishness has brought me great distress.”

Factually, Vidura’s wife’s giving Him banana skins and Vidura’s giving Him bananas were both pleasing to Kṛṣṇa, for He accepts only the loving sentiments of the devotees. Only one who has love and devotion for the Supreme Lord can understand this mystery. This incident is widely broadcast in the pages of devotional literature. Here I have only given a hint of the nature of the treasure of love of God.

❀ Śrī Akrūra ❀

Being sent by Kāṁsa to bring Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to Mathurā, Akrūra was very happy when he started for Nanda-gokula. Tears of ecstatic love flowed from his eyes. On the way, he eagerly awaited the moment when he would directly see his worshipable

Lord Kṛṣṇa. When he experienced some auspicious signs, Akrūra concluded that he would certainly meet his Lord face to face. He had no other desire than to see Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in Vṛndāvana. Indeed, his desire was so intense that he forgot his own self.

As soon as he entered the precincts of Gokula Vṛndāvana, Akrūra saw the footprints of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, which are decorated with the marks of a thunderbolt, flag, anchor, lotus, and many other symbols. Akrūra immediately jumped down from his chariot and began rolling on the ground, smearing the dust of Vṛndāvana all over his body. Śrī Akrūra then expertly offered descriptive prayers that were saturated with his devotional sentiments.

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī has described Akrūra’s intense devotional longing in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Thereafter, the brothers, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, embarrassed Akrūra by Their lavish display of affection. Whatever Akrūra thought about on the way to Vṛndāvana came true by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. Akrūra’s eyes blossomed as he gazed at the beauty of his worshipable Lord. His heart melted with love as he fully surrendered at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

❀ Śrī Sudāmā ❀

Lord Kṛṣṇa’s friend, Sudāmā, was a devotee so free from material desires that he did not even have a kilo of wheat flour in his

house. He earned his livelihood by engaging in the profession of a *brāhmaṇa*. One day, his wife approached him and reminded him that his friend, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, was the King of Dvārakā. Hearing her words and realizing her intension, Sudāmā became a little confused. His pure desireless heart became agitated as he thought, “Yes! It is true that our bond of friendship is very strong.”

Sudāmā’s wife, Suśilā, said, “You should go to Dvārakā and meet your friend, Kṛṣṇa. You can see His beautiful face, and whatever He gives you will help us in our time of need.”

Sudāmā said, “Your suggestion is a good one, but it will bring me infamy within the three worlds. People will say, ‘Now we know for what purpose Sudāmā became friends with Kṛṣṇa.’”

Suśilā said, “Don’t you want to see Kṛṣṇa’s sweet beauty? Simply by His *darśana*, all our miseries will be burnt to ashes. You just go and have His *darśana*. Do not beg for anything.”

When Sudāmā’s wife said this, he remembered the enchanting form of his dear friend, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He became restless with a longing for meeting his friend. Thus one day Sudāmā started out for Dvāraka in a jubilant mood. Upon his arrival, Sudāmā’s heart became filled with unprecedented happiness while viewing the opulence of Dvārakā. At the same time, his eyes were thirsty to drink the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s beauty, although he was afraid that a royal guard might stop him from entering His palace.

Somehow or other, Sudāmā summoned his courage, and after going through the gate, he entered Kṛṣṇa’s palace. It appeared that his intense desire to see the Lord awarded him entrance into the palace. When Lord Syāmasundara saw that His dear friend, Sudāmā, had come to see Him, out of ecstatic love He simply stood still for some time like a statue. Coming to external consciousness, Kṛṣṇa ran to His childhood friend and embraced him.

This was an exhibition of the wonderful characteristic of love and devotion. For some time they remained embracing each other, as if their two bodies were merged as one. Suddenly, Lord Kṛṣṇa remembered Sudāmā’s frailty and separated Himself.

Then, by the indication of Kṛṣṇa, Queen Rukmiṇī brought water in a costly container. The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, then washed Sudāmā’s feet with His own hands. Saying, “Today I have received a good opportunity to render service. It appears that Providence is pleased with Me,” Kṛṣṇa seated Sudāmā on His bed. Thereafter, Kṛṣṇa and Sudāmā conversed about their childhood pastimes when both of them studied at Sandīpaṇi Muni’s *gurukula* in present-day Ujjain. The Lord brought up these subjects just to immerse His friend, Sudāmā, in an ocean of happiness, and the Lord also felt great satisfaction.

Sudāmā had kept a small packet of flat rice hidden in the corner of his faded and torn cloth. Kṛṣṇa asked him, “My dear friend, what have you brought for Me?” Feeling the

gift to be very insignificant, Sudāmā could not decide whether to give it to his friend or not. He felt embarrassed while thinking about Kṛṣṇa profound love for him, and his own poverty-stricken condition. He kept gazing at the floor as tears filled his eyes. Kṛṣṇa then snatched the packet of flat rice from Sudāmā and began eating it, a morsel at a time.

Kṛṣṇa was very pleased to receive such a gift of love, but when He was about to eat a third morsel, Queen Rukmiṇī caught hold of His hand and said, “How is it that You are relishing such delicious food alone? Kindly distribute a little to us as well.”

Kṛṣṇa gave Rukmiṇī a morsel of flat rice. She was very satisfied with Sudāmā’s love and affection for Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa, understanding the intention of Sudāmā’s wife, gave him unlimited wealth in charity, but Sudāmā did not yet know of this. Sudāmā stayed at Dvārakā with his friend for seven days and then returned home feeling the anguish of separation from Kṛṣṇa. This story reveals the mystery of true friendship.

When Sudāmā returned to his village, he saw that it had transformed into a newly constructed, beautiful city. The buildings and opulence of the city equaled that of Dvārakā. Sudāmā was certainly struck with wonder. He wondered, “Where is my cottage, and where is my wife? Has a king established a city here?”

Meanwhile, having received great opulence by the mercy of the Lord, and seeing the arrival of her husband, Sudāmā’s

wife approached him while surrounded by hundreds of companions. She respectfully greeted her exalted husband, explaining to him that it was by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa that they had been blessed with so much opulence.

Despite achieving unlimited opulence, Sudāmā did not become attached to it, thinking that it would increase his propensity for sense gratification. He passed his time always drinking the sweet nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s beautiful, transcendental form. That was the special characteristic of his love for Kṛṣṇa. He had no desire for material enjoyment. He would accept enjoyment only as much as was necessary to keep his body and soul together. He continued living just as before when he was impoverished, relishing the happiness of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness on the platform of transcendental love.

❀ Śrī Candrahāsa ❀

There was a king named Sudhārmika who ruled in Keralā, South India. He had a devotee son named Candrahāsa. After his birth, Candrahāsa’s father died in a battle and his mother entered the funeral pyre, thus giving up her life. The enemy king took over the rule of the kingdom. Thus the young Candrahāsa had a difficult life from the very beginning.

After the father’s death, the nurse took Candrahāsa to a place known as Kuntalapur and began residing there under the protection

of a local minister named Dhṛṣṭabuddhi. She raised Candrahāsa like her own son so that the people of that area thought that the boy really was her son. Then, by the arrangement of Providence, when Candrahāsa was only five years old, the nurse died so that the boy became an orphan with no guardian.

Candrahāsa always played with his friends in a way that would increase his devotion for the Supreme Lord. One day, Nārada Muni appeared before Candrahāsa and gave him a small śāligrāma-śilā to worship. He also instructed Candrahāsa about chanting the holy names of the Lord. The astonishing thing was that Candrahāsa daily worshiped the śālogrāma-śilā and then kept it in his mouth.

One day, there was a feast for the *brāhmaṇas* offered by Dhṛṣṭabuddhi. By the arrangement of Providence, Candrahāsa was playing near to where the best of *brāhmaṇas* were sitting. Dhṛṣṭabuddhi arrived and asked the *brāhmaṇas*, “Tell me about the good or bad fortune of my daughter. What kind of husband will she get?”

In response, the *brāhmaṇas* gestured toward Candrahāsa and said, “This boy should be the husband of your daughter.” Dhṛṣṭabuddhi felt highly embarrassed after hearing that a son of a maidservant should become the husband of his daughter.

Dhṛṣṭabuddhi was confused. He thought, “Alas! What should I do now? Who is my daughter and who is that orphan boy, the son of a maidservant? How can a king’s minister have such a son-in-law? This cannot

happen, for if it does, it will bring infamy to me and my family. Therefore the best thing to do would be to kill the boy and settle the matter once and for all.”

Having made up his mind in this way, Dhṛṣṭabuddhi called his hangmen and ordered, “Kill this boy immediately, for he is giving pain to my heart.” Having received Dhṛṣṭabuddhi’s order, the hangmen took Candrahāsa to a far away and solitary forest. They saw that the young man was very handsome and so, feeling compassionate, the hangmen condemned themselves, saying, “To hell with our bodies and low caste, for we have to mercilessly kill an innocent and pious person. There is no end to our feelings of remorse.”

The hangmen, being thus confused, turned to Candrahāsa and said, “Now we are going to kill you. Tell us who is going to protect you?”

Candrahāsa fearlessly replied, “I have only one request and that is that you kindly wait a few minutes. When I tell you, you can strike me with your weapons.” The handgmen agreed to this and so Candrahāsa took the śāligrāma-śilā from his mouth and worshiped Him with love and devotion, offering Him flowers and leaves from the forest. He then put the śāligrāma-śilā back in his mouth while merging himself in thought of his worshipable Lord. When his mind was firmly fixed on the form of the Lord so that he had become fearless, Candrahāsa made a gesture to the hangmen that they could now kill him.

And yet, while in their state of utter confusion, the hangmen suddenly fell unconscious to the ground. After awhile, when they regained consciousness, their hearts were filled with compassion. Seeing the pathetic condition of the young devotee, they felt sorry, and they became inclined toward the Supreme Lord. Candrahāsa had six toes on his left foot. Considering this to be a means for proving that had performed their heinous task, the hangmen cut off one of the toes to show Dhṛṣṭabuddhi.

Thereafter, the hangmen went to Dhṛṣṭabuddhi and showed him the severed toe, saying, “We have killed him. Here is the proof.” Dhṛṣṭabuddhi recognized the toe and accepted that Candrahāsa had been eliminated.

In the kingdom of Kuntalapura, there was a small province, the capital of which was Candanāvati. The ruler of that province, Kulinda, paid an annual tax to the King of Kuntalapura. King Kulinda enjoyed great material comfort and opulence, but he had no son. Having a great desire to have a son, this king, by the will of Providence, happened to pass by where the hangmen had abandoned Candrahāsa. The king saw that Candrahāsa was morose, and that he was surrounded by deer and birds. Knowing this to be an omen indicating a pious person, the ruler of Candanāvati ran to that young boy and embraced him with the joy that a poor person experiences upon suddenly attaining great wealth.

The king brought Candrahāsa home and

celebrated the occasion with great pomp. People came from all around to offer their good wishes and then returned home with significant wealth. After some time, and after careful consideration, Kulinda installed Candrahāsa as the heir apparent to the throne at Candanāvati. Being entrusted with the responsibility of ruling the kingdom, Candrahāsa encouraged his subjects to enhance their devotion for the Supreme Lord.

Candrahāsa never sent the annual tax to the king of Kuntalapura. Finally, in order to recover the tax, the king sent a small army, along with Dhṛṣṭabuddhi, to Candanāvati. Since a minister from Kuntalapura had come to his province, the King of Candanāvati offered him due respect. The minister didn’t understand that this was the same person he had previously condemned to death.

Dhṛṣṭabuddhi conceived of a dasterdly plan to recover the past due taxes. He wrote a letter and gave it to Candrahāsa, saying, “Give this to my son, Madana Sen, and tell him that he should immediately carry out the order that is contained therein.”

Candrahāsa took the letter and went to Kuntalapura. As he was about to reach the city, he realized that it was time for worshipping his śaligrāma-śīla. He took the śaligrāma-śīla from his mouth and worshiped Him with faith and devotion. After that, he rested for awhile and soon fell asleep, forgetting everything else.

Meanwhile, minister Dhṛṣṭabuddhi’s daughter happened to arrive at that place

with wandering with her girlfriends. When she saw Candrahāsa's handsome appearance, she became attached to him. Leaving behind her friends, she went to see Candrahāsa more closely. As she was examining Candrahāsa, she found the letter stuck in his turban and so she removed it and read it. The letter read, "My dear son, Madana, when you receive the person with this letter, simply kill him by giving him *viṣa* (poison). Have faith in my words and act without hesitation."

After reading the letter, the minister's daughter wondered, "Why has my father written that Madana should give him *viṣa*, instead of Viṣayā, which is my name? He must have made a mistake." Viṣayā added the letters *yā* to the word *viṣa* with the black ointment that decorated her eyes, and after replacing the letter, she happily departed to rejoin her friends. Together, they returned home in a joyful mood.

After some time, Candrahāsa woke up and went to meet the minister's son, Madana Sen, with the letter. Candrahāsa liked Madana Sen when the latter greeted him in a very friendly manner. Candrahāsa handed the letter to Madana. After reading it, he said, "This proposal is wonderful and to my liking."

Without wasting time, Madana Sen summoned the *brāhmaṇas* and on that very day had his sister marry Candrahāsa. He spent fabulous wealth for making sure that the wedding would be appreciated by all. After some time, evil-minded Dhr̥ṣṭabuddhi returned home. After hearing the news of

his daughter's marriage to Candrahāsa, he concluded that somehow or other his own death must be coming near. He was very sad to learn that Candrahāsa was now his son-in-law.

After some time, Dhr̥ṣṭabuddhi called his son Madana to a secluded place and asked, "How could you make such a mistake?" Madana replied, "I have done exactly what you had written in the letter." Saying this, Madana showed the letter to his father. After reading the letter, the father's body appeared to be burning in a blazing fire. In great distress, he thought, "I am most unlucky. I will have this man killed because I would rather my daughter become a widow than accept Candrahāsa as my son-in-law."

Thinking this, Dhr̥ṣṭabuddhi secretly summoned some criminals and ordered, "Go and wait at Devī's temple and kill whoever comes there to worship the deity." Thereafter, Dhr̥ṣṭabuddhi told Candrahāsa, "Go to Devī's temple and worship the goddess. This Devī is our family deity. It is the custom in our family that after marriage, the groom must go alone to Devī's temple and worship her."

Thus Candrahāsa went to Devī's temple to worship the deity. Meanwhile, the King of Kuntalapura declared, "Because I have no son, I will hand over my kingdom to my son-in-law, Candrahāsa. With the approval of everyone, the king said to Madana Sen, "Go quickly and bring Candrahāsa here. The auspicious moment has already arrived and so the installation should be performed

without delay.”

Madana Sen hurried to meet Candrāhāṣa and told him that he should quickly go to the royal assembly. He said, “The king is in a very happy mood and he wants to give you the rule of his kingdom without delay. Do not feel that Devī will be offended. Simply mediate upon her, and I will go in your place and worship the goddess.”

Madana Sen thus went and sat in Devī’s temple, and the hired criminals mercilessly killed him. Meantime, when Candrāhāṣa arrived at the royal assembly, the king performed the coronation ceremony. Thus it came to be that all the people of the city joyfully welcomed Candrāhāṣa as their new king.

Someone approached Dhṛṣṭabuddhi and said, “Your son has been killed by hired criminals in the temple of the goddess.” Hearing this, the minister began piteously grieving. He rushed to Devī’s temple and fell down on the body of his dead son, pouring out his unbearable grief. Indeed, he smashed his head against the temple wall and thus gave up his life. He was such an unfortunate soul.

When the new king, Candrāhāṣa, heard the news, he went to Devī’s temple. Remembering the lotus feet of the goddess, he was ready to cut off his head as an offering, feeling very aggrieved. Understanding this, Devī said, “Dhṛṣṭabuddhi was your enemy. I killed him because I was angry at his ill motives.”

Candrāhāṣa said, “It was actually I who was

supposed to die, but because Madana came in my place, he was killed. After hearing about the death of his son, Dhṛṣṭabuddhi came here and also died out of grief. I consider both of them to be faultless and so I beg from you this benediction, that both of them may regain their lives.”

After Candrāhāṣa offered this prayer, both Dhṛṣṭabuddhi and Madana Sen came back to life. After understanding what had happened, Dhṛṣṭabuddhi’s good sense was awakened. Later on, both father and son became very pious and fortunate souls due to realizing the glories of the devotees of the Lord.

Candrāhāṣa ruled his kingdom in such a way that all his subjects became devotees of the Lord, regularly chanting His holy names and describing His glories. In addition, they were always very eager to serve saintly persons. They practically gave up all desires for material enjoyment. Gradually they were able to conquer lust, anger, greed, and false pride. Having Candrāhāṣa as their master and guardian, all the subjects utilized their valuable human lives to attain perfection. Out of affection, they kept Candrāhāṣa as the center of all their activities. The character of King Candrāhāṣa was very pleasing from the very beginning of his life up to the end. Anyone who reads or remembers this narration in the morning will attain devotional service unto Lord Hari. This was written by Vyāsadeva in the *Jaiminī-saṁhitā*.

❀ Śrī Citraketu ❀

The character and activities of the great devotee King Citraketu are recounted in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Although he was an exalted devotee, he had to accept the form of a demon because of offending Lord Śiva. And yet, even as a demon his devotion to the Lord remained intact and unaffected.

King Citraketu had ten million queens. By the mercy of the sages, Nārada and Aṅgirā, one of the queens recieved a son; but the child was poisoned by her jealous co-wives. When that only son died, King Citraketu became highly aggrieved, and as he was lamenting, the great sage Nārada arrived. Nārada Muni summoned the spirit soul of the child and had him speak about his previous life. By hearing the words of the small boy, the king and other palace residents came to their senses and understood the necessity for becoming spiritually enlightened.

By chanting the *mantras* and *prayers* instructed by Nārada, King Citraketu pleased his worshipable Lord Śāṅkarṣaṇa. By the mercy of the Lord, he was awarded a celestial chariot whose progress could not be impeded. However, because of the curse of Goddess Pārvatī, King Citraketu had to take birth as the demon named Vṛtrāsura.

Once, when Vṛtrāsura was fighting with Indra, the King of heaven, he prayed, “O my Lord, kindly bestow Your mercy upon me so that I may have the opportunity to render service at the lotus feet of the devotees who have taken shelter of Your lotus feet. O Lord

of my heart, may I always remember Your transcendental qualities, may my speech glorify those qualities, and may my body always remain engaged in Your service. O ocean of all good fortune, I do not want, leaving aside Your lotus feet, a heavenly kingdom, residence in Brahmāloka, rule of the earth, or the undisputed rule of the lower planet, Rasātala. My Lord, I do not long for any kind of mystic perfection, and what to speak of this, I do not even desire liberation from material existence.

“O lotus-eyed Lord, as newly hatched birds are always eager to see their mother, as a hungry calf hankers after drinking its mother’s milk, as a faithful wife is always anxious to meet her husband when he is far away from home, so my mind is greatly agitated by the desire to see Your beautiful form.

“My Lord, I do not want salvation. If I have to remain within the cycle of repeated birth and death as a result of my *karma*, my only prayer is that wherever I go, and in whatever form of life I may take birth in, may I have the association of your dear devotees.

“O my master, my only wish is that I may always remain aloof from the association of people who are too attached to sense gratification, their bodies, wealth, families, and so on.”

Indra could understand the highly elevated consciousness of the demon, Vṛtrāsura. Then, when Indra killed Vṛtrāsura with his thunderbolt, the soul of the demon came out of his body and, as everyone looked on

in wonder, entered the body of the Lord.

❀ The five Pāṇḍavas ❀

❀ Śrī Gajendra ❀

In his previous life, Gajendra, the king of elephants, was a king named Indradyumna, who belonged to Pāṇḍya dynasty of South India. One day, as King Indradyumna was engaged in the service of the Lord in a solitary place, the great sage Agastya arrived. The king did not stand up to receive the sage and as a result, he was cursed by Agastya to take birth as an elephant.

There was a Gandharva named Hūhū. Once, while bathing, he pulled the leg of the sage, Devala, who was also bathing there, and thus he was cursed to become a crocodile. Both were born near Trikūṭa Mountain in South India. The crocodile lived in a lake at the foot of Trikūṭa Mountain. Once, when Gajendra, the king of elephants, came there to bathe, the crocodile attacked him so that a fierce battle took place that went on for a very long time.

Finally, Gajendra, finding no other means to get freed from the clutches of the crocodile, took shelter of the Supreme Lord. He offered beautiful prayers in glorification of the Lord and begged for His mercy. The Lord then appeared and killed the crocodile with His Sudarśaṇa *cakra*, thus delivering his devotee, Gajendra.

The five Pāṇḍavas; Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva were the sons of Pāṇḍu. Because of a sage's curse, Pāṇḍu had no son. However, his two queens, Kuntī and Mādri, invoked the demigods and were thus blessed with five sons. Kuntī begot a portion of Dharmarāja, named Yudhiṣṭhira. She begot a portion of Vāyu named Bhīma, and a portion of Indra named Arjuna. Mādri was blessed by the twin Aśvinī-kumāras so that she had twins named Nakula and Sahadeva. The five Pāṇḍavas were great devotees and friends of Kṛṣṇa, and indeed Kṛṣṇa was their very life and soul.

❀ Śrī Maitreya ❀

The name Kauṣārava that Śrī Nābhājī wrote in this book actually refers to the great sage, Maitreya. When Lord Kṛṣṇa was imparting instructions to Uddhava just prior to His disappearance, Maitreya was also present. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, ordered Maitreya to go and meet His devotee, Vidura, and repeat to him the instructions of transcendental knowledge and devotional service that he had heard from Him. This conversation between the great sage, Maitreya, and Vidura is elaborately described in the Third Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

❀ Queen Kuntī ❀

Who in this world is so fortunate as to possess a love and affection for Kṛṣṇa equal to that of Queen Kuntī? People in general try their best to avoid calamities and dangers, but Queen Kuntī hoped for more calamities. She prayed to Kṛṣṇa, “My dear Lord, I wish that all those calamities would happen again and again so that we could see You again and again, for seeing You means that we will no longer see repeated births and deaths.”

While seeing Queen Kuntī’s intense eagerness, devotion, and affection, Kṛṣṇa’s eyes became filled with tears. Although Kṛṣṇa was about to depart for Dvārakā, He delayed his departure because of Queen Kuntī’s heartfelt prayers. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was Kuntī’s body, mind, and very life. When Kuntī heard that Kṛṣṇa had left this world after reducing the burden of the earth, she could not tolerate His separation and so she also gave up her life. Such is the dedication and determination of a pure, unalloyed devotee.

❀ Queen Draupadī ❀

Who is that wise and learned poet who could adequately describe the qualities of chaste Draupadī? She had unflinching faith and devotion for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Duryodhana cheated to defeat Yudhiṣṭhira in a game of dice and thus won everything wagered,

including Draupadī. By the order of wicked Duryodhana, his brother, Duśāsana, tried to unrobe Draupadī in front of the assembly of Kurus. As he pulled her clothing, new cloth appeared in its place hundreds and thousands of times. Draupadī prayed to Kṛṣṇa for protection: “O Lord of Dvārakā, please protect me from these wicked persons who have no shame in violating my chastity in this assembly of learned persons.”

Although the Supreme Lord was already present by Draupadī’s side because He is all-pervading, since she had addressed Him as the Lord of Dvārakā, Kṛṣṇa appeared before her after leaving Dvārakā. The Supreme Lord always insures that the words of His devotees never prove false.

When the Pāṇḍavas, along with Draupadī, were living in exile, wicked Duryodhana requested Durvāṣā Muni to become their guest. He suggested, “Go to the Pāṇḍavas’ camp when they, along with Draupadī, have already taken their meal. Go at that time and ask them for some food.”

Thus Durvāṣā Muni, along with his disciples, went to visit the Pāṇḍavas in the forest. Upon Durvāṣā’s arrival, Yudhiṣṭhira respectfully invited him for lunch. Yudhiṣṭhira then turned to Draupadī and said, “Arrange a meal for all the sages,” but she replied, “Now that I have taken my meal, I have washed the *akṣaya-pātra*, the inexhaustible pot given by Sūrya, and so nothing remains.”

Hearing this, all the brothers headed by Yudhiṣṭhira felt highly alarmed. They said,

❀ Text 10 ❀

“If the sage does not get the meal he was promised, he will burn us to ashes with his curse. Therefore, before he burns us to ashes, we should gather dry wood and burn ourselves. By doing so, we will be saved from offending a *brāhmaṇa*.”

Draupadī said, “Don’t be worried, for Śrī Kṛṣṇa always helps His devotees. Won’t He help us now?”

Hearing this from devoted Draupadī, Yudhiṣṭhira remembered Lord Kṛṣṇa, who immediately manifested His presence. Simply by His *darśana*, everyone felt relief. Lord Kṛṣṇa asked for some food and so everyone felt embarrassed since there was nothing remaining. Feeling ashamed, everyone simply stood silently. Seeing their embarrassment, Kṛṣṇa said, “What to speak of Durvāṣā Muni and his disciples, you have enough food to satisfy the people of the entire world. Why are you hiding this from Me?”

Draupadī brought the celestial pot and placed it before Kṛṣṇa. As if by chance, a tiny piece of spinach was stuck on the side of the pot. Lord Kṛṣṇa picked up that piece of spinach and ate it. By this act, Kṛṣṇa felt fully satisfied. And the result was that all the inhabitants of the three worlds felt fully satisfied, their hunger being completely mitigated. What then could be said about Durvāṣā Muni and his disciples?

I earnestly desire to attain the lotus feet of the devotees in whose hearts the Supreme Personality of Godhead resides. May I always sing the glories of all these male and female devotees, including the Nava-Yogendras, Śrutideva, King Aṅga, Mucukunda; Priyavrata, the conqueror of the earth; King Pṛthu, Mahārāja Parikṣit, Śeṣa, Sūta Gosvāmī, the sages headed by Śaunaka, the Pracetās, Satarūpā, Prasūtī, Ākūtī, Devahūtī, Sunīti; Satī, the daughter of Dakṣa; all chaste women, Mandālasā, the wives of the sacrificial *brāhmaṇas*, and the *gopīs* of Vraja, who purchased Kṛṣṇa’s favor by rendering loving devotional service unto Him.

❀ The Nava-yogendras ❀

The natures and qualities of the *nava-yogendras* are described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. They were the sons of Lord Rṣabhadeva and were great devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Once, as King Nimī was performing a great sacrifice with the help of many great sages, the *nava-yogendras* arrived at his sacrificial arena. The king respectfully greeted the sages and said, “It is very rare to attain the human form of life. Even after attaining this rare birth, one is always afraid of death, which is inevitable. Even in this temporary human life it is very difficult to attain the

association of the pure devotees of the Lord. I wish to know from you what is supremely beneficial for all living entities, and how they can achieve that ultimate benefit. Also, kindly describe the religious principles whereby one can attain the shelter of the Lord's lotus feet."

The first *yogendra* to reply was Kavi, who described the procedures for worshipping the Supreme Lord, the process of surrender, and the glories of the Lord's holy names, forms, qualities, and pastimes. The second *yogendra*, Havī, described the glories of the Supreme Lord's devotees. The third *yogendra*, Avirhotra, described how the activities of worshipping and serving the Supreme Lord are the ultimate goal of life. The fourth *yogendra*, Antarikṣa, elaborately described the influence of the Lord's illusory energy, *māyā*. The fifth *yogendra*, Prabuddha, described the ways by which one can cross beyond the insurmountable ocean of material existence. The sixth *yogendra*, Pippalāyana, described the forms of the Lord and other subjects of devotional service. The seventh *yogendra*, Camasa, explained the nature of the fallen, conditioned souls and stated that even those who are averse to the Lord can be rectified by the association of saintly devotees. The eighth *yogendra*, Drumila, described the various incarnations of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the ninth *yogendra*, Karabhājana, while describing the spiritual practices in the four *yugas*, explained how in Kali-yuga the congregational chanting of the Lord's holy

names is the only recommended process that is practically effective.

❀ Śrutadeva ❀

The dust from the lotus feet of the devotees in whose hearts the Supreme Lord resides is full of transcendental potency. Therefore one should smear this dust upon one's head, thinking it to be an ornament. The great devotees, such as the *nava-yogendras*, are very expert in relishing the nectar of love of God. Let me tell you something about one such devotee, Śrutadeva.

Once, when Śrutadeva saw that Lord Kṛṣṇa had come to his home, his heart became filled with love for Him. He raised his hands over his head and began dancing in ecstasy. He was so much absorbed in transcendental love for Kṛṣṇa that He even forgot to properly receive the Lord and His devotees and offer obeisances to them. Lord Kṛṣṇa then said, "I consider the devotees to be superior to Me and so you should respectfully offer obeisances to them and worship them."

❀ King Aṅga ❀

Saintly King Aṅga was born in the noble dynasty of Dhruva Mahārāja. After performing severe austerities, his father, Ulmuka, and his mother, Puṣkariṇī,

received him as their son. King Aṅga's wife was Sunīthā, the daughter of Mṛtyu. Because they didn't have a son, the demigods did not accept their shares in the performance of Aṅga's horse sacrifice. Therefore the king performed a fire sacrifice in the hopes of receiving a son. Finally he was blessed with a son, named Vena. King Vena was very sinful and a reservoir of all demoniac qualities. Because he had such a wicked and sinful son, Aṅga secretly left home in the dead of night and went to the forest to worship Lord Hari.

❀ Mucukunda ❀

Mucukunda was the son of King Māndhātā in the dynasty of Ikṣvāku. He was very devoted to the *brāhmaṇas*, and he was truthful, victorious in battle, and a very powerful ruler of men. Once, he assisted the demigods in fighting with the demons. When Kārtikeya, the commander-in-chief of the demigods' army, was busy elsewhere, Mucukunda inflicted the demons with heavy losses. Mucukunda became exhausted and so the demigods advised him to rest, and they benedicted him that if anyone disturbed his sleep, that person would be burnt to ashes by his glance.

King Mucukunda went to a mountain cave at Dhavalapura (Dhaupura) and slept. Lord Kṛṣṇa, so that Kālayavana would be burnt to ashes, left the battlefield and entered the cave at Dhavalapura. He then placed His

cā dara over Mucukunda, who was lying there asleep. Kālayavana, who had been fighting with Kṛṣṇa, followed Him into the cave, thinking that He was trying to hide. Seeing someone lying on the ground, and thinking it to be Kṛṣṇa, Kālayavana woke that person up. When Mucukunda gazed at Kālayavana, he was immediately burnt to ashes.

Thereafter, King Mucukunda offered beautiful prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa then instructed him to worship the Lord with undeviating attention while performing austerities so that he could counteract the reactions of the sins he had committed while hunting animals in the forest. The Lord also revealed to him that in his next life he would attain loving devotional service to Him and thus engage in delivering the fallen souls. In his next birth, King Mucukunda appeared as Śrī Narasī in the province of Gujarāta.

❀ Priyavrata ❀

The conquerer of the world

King Priyavrata was the son of Svāyambhuva Manu and a great devotee of the Lord. By serving the lotus feet of the great sage, Nārada, he became advanced in spiritual understanding. By the order of his father, he married Viśvakarmā's daughter, Barhiṣmatī. With her he had ten sons and one daughter as he ruled the earth for eleven billion years. It is often said about Priyavrata that only the Supreme Lord could surpass what he had accomplished. While dissipating

the darkness of night, he circumambulated the earth seven times so that seven oceans were created by the rims of the wheels of his chariot.

❁ King Pṛthu ❁

King Pṛthu was a great devotee of the Supreme Lord and a pious ruler of men. The Lord once asked King Pṛthu to accept a benediction. In reply, King Pṛthu said, “My Lord, I do not want even liberation if I am not able to relish the nectar of narrations concerning Your pastimes which emanate from the lotus mouths of Your exalted devotees. My request is that You award me ten thousand ears so that I can better hear the narrations of Your pastimes and the delineation of Your transcendental qualities.”

After hearing this appeal, the Supreme Personality of Godhead fulfilled King Pṛthu’s desires and then disappeared.

❁ Mahārāja Parikṣit ❁

Mahārāja Parikṣit attained perfection simply by hearing about the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is said that the more he heard the nectarean narrations of the Lord, the more his desire to hear them increased. Mahārāja Parikṣit saw the form of the Lord when he was within the womb

of his mother, although great sages meditate with the hope of seeing that form within their hearts and yet fail to do so. While hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Mahārāja Parikṣit said to Śukadeva Gosvāmī, “My life is now dedicated to hearing narrations of the Lord’s qualities, forms, and pastimes so that I have no more fear of a snake bite. If you so desire, you can test me.”

Śukadeva Gosvāmī understood that Mahārāja Parikṣit was firmly fixed in hearing the transcendental glories of the Lord. On the seventh day, when Śukadeva Gosvāmī concluded his recitation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Mahārāja Parikṣit gave up his mortal body.

❁ Śeṣa ❁

Śrī Ananta Śeṣa is an eternal associate of the Supreme Lord. His aim of life is to render varieties of service to his Lord and master. For nourishing the Lord’s pastimes, Śeṣa takes various forms, such as the Lord’s residence, bed, sitting place, shoes, garment, pillow, umbrella, as well as many others. Śeṣa encourages the conditioned souls to surrender at the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. For this reason all the demigods, asuras, Nāgas, Siddhas, Gandharvas, Vidyādhara, sages, and human beings meditate, pray to, and glorify Lord Ananta Śeṣa. Ananta Śeṣa is the predominating deity of *Īlāvṛta-varṣa*, and Lord Śiva is his worshiper. He resides at the bottom of the lower planetary

systems and holds all the universes upon his thousands of hoods. With thousands of mouths, Ananta Śeṣa eternally glorifies the Lord, and up to today he does not find any śeṣa, or end, and for that reason He is called Śeṣa.

❀ Sūta Gosvāmī ❀

The *sūta* caste indicates birth from a *brāhmaṇa* mother and *kṣatriya* father. While introducing himself in the beginning of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī said, “Although I was born in a lower caste family, by rendering service to great souls my life became perfect. By conversing with great saintly persons, one’s disqualification of being born in a low class family vanishes.”

By the mercy of Vyāsadeva, Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī became the authority for understanding the *Purāṇas* and Historical works. Vyāsadeva especially blessed him to become an eloquent speaker of the *Purāṇas*. When Śukadeva Gosvāmī narrated Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to Mahārāja Parīkṣit, Sūta Gosvāmī was present in the assembly. Later on he recited Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to an assembly of eighty-eight-thousand sages, headed by Śaunaka, at Naimiṣāranya. The intention of that assembly was to perform sacrifice for a period of one thousand years so that the pernicious effects of Kali-yuga would be curtailed.

Previously, Lord Balarāma had arrived at Naimiṣāranya, but Romaharṣaṇa Sūta, the

father of Sūta Gosvāmī, did not stand up from his speaker’s seat to show Him respect. Because of this offense, Lord Balarāma became angry and with a blade of *kuśa* grass He cut off Romaharṣaṇa Sūta’s head. When all the assembled sages prayed to Lord Balarāma to revive Romaharṣaṇa Sūta so that the recitation of the *Purāṇas* could continue, He installed his son, Ugraśravā, upon the *vyāsāsana*. Thereafter, Ugraśravā became known as Sūta Gosvāmī.

❀ The sages, headed by Śaunaka ❀

Śaunaka Ṛṣi is so named because he was the son of the sage, Śunaka. He is also addressed as Bhārgava, because he belonged to dynasty of Bhṛgu. He was highly endowed with spiritual knowledge, and he had performed severe austerities. He was the leader of the sages and a follower of the Ṛg *Veda*. Just as Sūta Gosvāmī was recognized as the authorized speaker of the *Purāṇas*, Śaunaka was recognized as the principal hearer. Śrīla Vyāsadeva considered him to be a devotee who is very attentive while hearing the nectarian glories of the Supreme Lord. According to Śaunaka Ṛṣi, hearing narrations concerning the Supreme Lord in the association of devotees is the perfection of life. He says in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, “Doesn’t a tree live? Doesn’t a bellows breathe? Don’t the animals of the village also eat, drink, and pass semen? One who does not hear the narrations of the pastimes

of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is no better than the dogs, hogs, camels, and asses.”

❁ The Pracetās ❁

There were ten Pracetās, the sons of King Prācinabarhi, belonging to the dynasty of King Pṛthu. The Pracetās were born from the womb of Śatadruti. On the order of their father, they performed severe austerities within the ocean and thus attained spiritual enlightenment. They heard glorification of the Supreme Lord from Lord Śiva, which is known as the *Rudra-gītā*. Later on, being so ordered by the Supreme Lord, they married Māriṣā, the daughter of the Apsarā, Pramlocā, and the sage, Kaṇḍu. They ruled the earth for one million years and then, having received spiritual knowledge from Nārada Muni, went back to Godhead while remembering the Supreme Lord.

❁ Śatarūpā's daughters ❁ Prasūti, Ākūti, and Devahūti

Svāyambhuva Manu and his wife, Śatarūpā, had three daughters named Prasūti, Ākūti, and Devahūti. Ākūti was married to Prajāpati Ruci, in whose presence the Supreme Lord, Yajña, appeared. Prasūti was married to Prajāpati Dakṣa, and goddess Satī appeared as their daughter. Devahūti was married

to the sage, Kardama. The Supreme Lord, Kapiladeva, appeared as their son. The three sisters were all great devotees of the Supreme Lord, and they help increase the population of the world.

❁ Sunīti ❁

Sunīti was the wife of King Uttānapāda, and the mother of Dhruva Mahārāja. She was instrumental in Dhruva Mahārāja's attaining the Lord's favor and having His *darśana*. Being advised by her, Dhruva Mahārāja went to the forest to look for the Supreme Lord.

❁ Madālāsā ❁

Madālāsā was the daughter of Viśvāvasu, the king of the Gandharvas. By her chastity, sublime qualities, and gentle nature she minimized the stature of the celestial women of the heavenly planets. She was married to Ṛtadhvaja (Kūvalāśva), the son of King Śatrujita. By rendering service to saintly persons, and by the influence of their good association, Madālāsā realized that material existence is full of miserable conditions and containing only insignificant happiness. Her conclusion was that one should give up all kinds of material attachments. However, if one is unable to give up all material attachments then he should associate with

saintly devotees, because that is the only means for severing one's ties to material existence.



❀ The wives of the sacrificial brāhmaṇas ❀

❀ The gopīs of Vraja ❀

One day, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, along with the cowherd boys, went to Madhuvana for tending the cows. When the boys became hungry, Lord Kṛṣṇa sent them to beg for some food from some *brāhmaṇas* who were performing sacrifices. However, the *brāhmaṇas* ignored the cowherd boys' request and continued with their rituals. The boys returned and explained everything to Kṛṣṇa, who then sent them to beg some food from the wives of the *brāhmaṇas*. When the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* heard the boys' request, they hurriedly went to see Śyāmasundara and Balarāma with plates of delicious foodstuffs, and they fed Them with love and devotion. Simply by seeing Lord Kṛṣṇa, they considered their lives to be successful.

When the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* returned home, their husbands came to their senses after seeing their spontaneous attachment to the Supreme Lord. Indeed, the *brāhmaṇas* lamented, saying, "Alas! We are averse to Lord Kṛṣṇa and so our noble birth, Gāyatrī initiation, study of the *Vedas*, performance of sacrifices, education, vows, learning, and fruitive activities are all condemned." In this way, the *brāhmaṇas* highly praised the devotional mood of their wives.

What to speak of others, even the women of Mathurā glorify the good fortunate of the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana. They say, "O friends! Glorious are the *gopīs* of Vraja! Because their hearts are forever fixed on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and because of their love for Kṛṣṇa, their voices become choked up when they sing about His pastimes. While milking the cows, while churning yogurt, while husking rice paddy, while smearing cow dung on the floor, while swinging their children, while trying to stop their children from weeping, while bathing their children, while dusting and mopping their homes, and while engaging in all types of household affairs, they simply sing about the transcendental glories of their beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

It is a well-known fact that Lord Kṛṣṇa felt indebted because of the love and devotion of the *gopīs*. Kṛṣṇa said, "My dear girls, understanding that simply for My sake you had rejected the authority of worldly opinion, of the *Vedas*, and of your relatives, I acted as I did only to increase your attachment for Me. Even when I removed Myself from your sight by suddenly disappearing, I never stopped loving you. Therefore, My beloved *gopīs*, please do not harbor any ill feelings

toward Me, your beloved. I would not be able to repay My debt for your spotless service even with a lifetime of Brahmā. Your connection with Me is beyond reproach. You have worshiped Me, cutting off all domestic ties, which are difficult to be freed from. Therefore, please let your own glorious deeds be your compensation.”

❀ **Text 11** ❀

Prācīnabarhi, Satyavrata, Rahugaṇa, Sagara, Bhagīratha, the great sage Vālmiki, Śvapaca Vālmiki, Rukmāṅgada, Hariścandra, Bharata, the supremely liberal Dadhīcī, Suratha, Sudhanvā, Śivi; wise and gentle Vindhyaśālī, the wife of Bali; Nīladvaja, Moradhaja, Tāmradhaja, and Alarka. May I have attachment for chanting the glories of all these wonderful devotees of the Lord. May I feel satisfied while hearing their glorification. I beg that I may receive the dust from their feet in each and every lifetime.

❀ **Prācīnabarhi** ❀

King Prācīnabarhi was the son of King Havīrdhāna. He sacrificed many animals with a desire to attain the heavenly planets. The great sage Nārada approached him and caused fear to enter his heart by narrating to him the allegorical story of Puraṇjana. Being

enlightened with spiritual understanding, Prācīnabarhi gave up all material attachment and fixed his mind on the lotus feet of Lord Hari in a mood of devotion. Thus he attained the shelter of the Lord’s lotus feet and received a body similar to that of the Lord.

❀ **Satyavrata** ❀

Satyavrata was the king of Draviḍa, South India. The Supreme Personality of Godhead assumed the form of a fish and instructed Satyavrata Muni about spiritual understanding.

❀ **Rahugaṇa** ❀

Rahugaṇa was the ruler of the provinces of Sindhu and Sauvira. He was traveling to the āśrama of Lord Kapila for receiving spiritual enlightenment when on the way, by the will of the Lord, he met the great devotee, Jaḍa Bharata. His life became successful by receiving the instructions of Jaḍa Bharata. This will be described later on.

❀ **Sagara and Bhagīratha** ❀

King Sagara was the son of Bāhuka, who appeared in the Sūrya dynasty. His stepmothers administered *gara*, or “poison” while he was in the womb of his mother,

but by the mercy of the sage Aurva, it did not kill the embryo. Because he was given *gara*, he became known as Sagara, and later became the emperor of the entire world. He begot a son named Asamañjaśa from his wife, Keśinī, and from another wife, Sumatī, he begot sixty thousand sons. Once, when he performed a horse sacrifice, Indra stole the sacrificial horse and hid it near the āśrama of Lord Kapila.

While searching for the stolen horse, the sixty thousand sons of Sagara arrived at Kapila's āśrama. Seeing the horse tied there, they abused the sage with harsh language. When Lord Kapila opened His eyes, all the princes were burnt to ashes. Thereafter, Asamañjaśa's son, Amśumān, prayed to Lord Kapila for the deliverance of his forefathers. The horse was returned and the Lord informed Amśumān that his forefathers could be delivered by the water of the Gaṅgā.

Amśumān's son was Dilīpa, who was unsuccessful in bringing the Gaṅgā down to earth. Dilīpa's son, Bhagīratha, performed great austerities and brought the Gaṅgā down from the heavenly planets to the earth, thus delivering his ancestors. During his long reign, King Bhagīratha worshiped the Supreme Lord, Yajña, by performing one hundred horses sacrifice.

❀ The great sage Vālmiki ❀

While expressing Śrī Nābhā's internal

mood, Śrī Priyādās continues to give his commentary. Alas! Even if I have to accept repeated births in this material world, this will not be very troublesome, but will rather be beneficial for me, for I will have an opportunity to smear the dust from the lotus feet of the devotees upon my head.

The stories of great devotees, such as Prācīnabarhi are vividly described in the *Purāṇas*, as well as the *Mahābhārata*. The stories of the great sage, Vālmiki, and another devotee named Vālmiki, should never be forgotten.

The great sage, Vālmiki, behaved just like a lowborn person known as Bhīla, but when he received the association of saintly sages, he also became a sage. He had the *darśana* of Lord Rāmacandra, and compiled *Rāmāyaṇa*, in which he elaborately described the pastimes and personality of Lord Rāma. The people of the world are never satiated while hearing and reciting the great epic poem, *Rāmāyaṇa*. The hearts of both the speaker and the listeners become filled with love for Lord Rāma as tears flow from their eyes.

❀ Śvapaca Vālmiki ❀

There was a famous devotee of the Lord known as Śvapaca Vālmiki. He would always remain in solitary places. It was Lord Kṛṣṇa who revealed him to the world. A description of him is found in the *Mahābhārata*.

Among the five Pāṇḍava brothers,

Yudhiṣṭhira was the eldest. He performed many sacrifices. Whenever he would arrange for a fire sacrifice, many sages and saintly persons from numerous places would come to participate. Once, when Yudhiṣṭhira had arranged for the performance of a sacrifice, Lord Kṛṣṇa placed His conchshell in the arena and said, “When this sacrifice is completed, the conchshell will automatically sound. That is to say, the conchshell will sound to reveal the success of the sacrifice. If at the end of the sacrifice, the conchshell does not sound, it is to be understood that there was some mistake, or fault, in its performance so that it remains incomplete.”

It so happened that at the end of the sacrifice, the conchshell did not sound, even though the offering of oblations, feeding of the *brāhmaṇas*, giving of charity, and other necessities were executed. Everyone became alarmed, thinking that despite so much hard labor, the sacrifice was not successful. All the assembled persons approached Lord Kṛṣṇa and said, “O Lord! Please describe to us the fault in this performance of sacrifice.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, “I will reveal to you the mystery of why the conchshell did not sound, and you should all accept this as true. It is a very confidential truth. Although so many sages and others have assembled here, and although they were fed to their full satisfaction, no pure Vaiṣṇava has yet been fed. You may say, “Are there no saintly persons among the sages?” How could I say that there are no saintly sages here, because there are great devotees among these sages?

Still, there is a confidential understanding in My heart, which is that I consider someone to be the greatest of all devotees when he is not at all proud of his high birth, education, knowledge of the scriptures, wealth, and so on. If you really want to complete this sacrifice, you have to invite such a devotee who considers himself to be a servant of My servant, and who is completely devoid of false pride.”

After hearing these words of Lord Kṛṣṇa, King Yudhiṣṭhira said, “O Lord! What you have said is certainly true, but I do not find such a great devotee in our city. I think that such a devotee who is free from false pride cannot be found on this earth.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa said, “No, you can find such a devotee in your city. He resides there throughout the entire day and night, but no one recognizes him, nor does he reveal himself.”

Upon hearing this, everyone was astonished. Their eyes and minds became restless, hoping to see this devotee. They said, “O Lord, kindly tell us his name and place of residence. We will go there and have his *darśana*, thus making our lives successful. Indeed, we will run to him and fall down at his lotus feet.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa said, “All of My devotees do not disclose their identities. Even when I reveal them, they feel embarrassed. Therefore I am a little concerned. My heartfelt desire is that the sacrifice be completed, but at the same time, I am afraid that if I reveal this devotee’s name, he may not continue

residing in the city but go elsewhere out of embarrassment.”

King Yudhiṣṭhira said, “My dear Śyāmasundara, tell us about this devotee in such a way that the relationship between You and him remains intact. We will go and invite him and feed him very nicely.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa said, “All of you go to the house of Śvapaca Vālmiki, for he is the pure devotee who is free from all material designations. I feel that I have made a mistake by revealing to you his identity.”

Bhīma and Arjuna were about to go to Vālmiki’s house with their invitation, but Kṛṣṇa cautioned them, saying “It is alright that you are going there, but be careful. It is very difficult to understand the internal moods of My devotees. They are very rarely seen, and very grave. Do not think otherwise after seeing this devotee, for if you consider him an ordinary man, you will commit an offence that will obstruct your devotional life.”

Bhīma and Arjuna arrived at Vālmiki’s house and circumambulated it. They offered their obsequies by falling flat onto the ground. When they entered the house, they saw that the temple room was very beautifully decorated. When Vālmiki saw Bhīma and Arjuna, he left aside whatever he was doing and stood up reverentially. Indeed, he felt embarrassed and began to tremble. Bhīma and Arjuna humbly said, “O exalted devotee, kindly come to our house tomorrow and accept our offering of food. By your presence, our sinful reactions will

diminish so that we achieve good fortune.”

After hearing himself being glorified by these two royal personalities, Vālmiki said, “My dear sirs, I am accustomed to cleaning up after everyone has finished eating. Indeed, it is I who sweep your doorsteps. This has been my duty for a very long time. I have not had the courage to even look at your faces. This is my actual position. What are you saying? You are inviting me? First have your meal and then whatever is left over can be given to me. I will be glad to accept your remnants.”

Bhīma and Arjuna said, “What are you saying? First you must eat and then you can give us your remnants. Without first feeding you, we will not eat. Now we have learned something of your devotional sentiments. You are certainly a loving devotee of the Supreme Lord.”

Hearing this, Vālmiki felt shy and embarrassed, and he became somewhat angry at Kṛṣṇa. He said, “You are kings and so you can do whatever you wish. How can I disobey your order?”

The two brothers said, “Please come to our place tomorrow morning. Do not forget or change your mind.” Vālmiki replied, “Alright, if you so desire, I will certainly come.”

After returning from Vālmiki’s house, Bhīma and Arjuna told everything to Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira. Yudhiṣṭhira was satisfied and felt affection for the devotee, Vālmiki, who was born in a family of dog-eaters. Lord Kṛṣṇa instructed Draupadī to

prepare varieties of foodstuffs. He said, “We have invited a great devotee and it will be to your credit if you can satisfy him by your cooking.”

After a nice meal was prepared, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira sent for Vālmiki. Vālmiki arrived and humbly said, “Kindly serve my meal outside your house,” but Lord Kṛṣṇa said, “O Yudhiṣṭhira, this devotee, Vālmiki, is like your brother and so go and bring him inside the house.” In this way, Vālmiki was respectfully greeted and brought inside the house. He was served the delicious foods cooked by Draupadī. Then as soon as Vālmiki placed food in his mouth, the conchshell sounded. After a short while, the conchshell stopped and so Kṛṣṇa struck it with a stick.

Kṛṣṇa asked the conchshell, “Why are you not sounding properly, even after the devotee has begun his meal? Are you ashamed of something? I think that you have forgotten the nature of true devotion.”

The conchshell said, “Go and ask Draupadī about this. Know for certain that my actions were not faulty.” When asked whether the statement of the conchshell was true, Draupadī said, “The devotee mixed all the different varieties of foods together before eating them. Because of this, the expertise of my cooking was covered. Seeing this disrespect to my art of cooking, I thought, ‘Anyway, this person belongs to a family of dog eaters and so what does he know about the different tastes of these preparations?’

Lord Kṛṣṇa asked Vālmiki, “Why did you mix all the varieties of food together before

eating? Vālmiki replied, “You had already tasted the food because they were offered to You. How could I enjoy the different tastes and thus consider them as ordinary food? I would find each preparation to either taste palatable or unpalatable, but then that would cause me to forget that I am honoring *prasāda*, the remnants of Your food. I was simply honoring your *prasāda*, and not eating varieties of food preparations.”

After hearing this, Draupadī felt great respect for the exalted devotee, Vālmiki. And just then the conchshell began loudly sounding. Seeing this, all the people began to glorify Vālmiki. Thus the sacrifice was successfully completed in a way that everyone came to know about the wonderful glories of the devotee, Vālmiki.

❀ Rukmāṅgada ❀

The garden of the saintly King Rukmāṅgada was resplendent with beautiful, fragrant flowers. Indeed, it was so enchanting that celestial women from the heavenly planets came there to collect flowers. One day, by the arrangement of Providence, a thorn from a *brinjal* plant pricked the foot of an Apsarā, and as a result, her pious merit became exhausted so that she could not return to the heavenly planets. In that situation she remained in the garden throughout the night, and in the morning, when the gardeners came there to pick flowers, they saw her. These men went and informed

Rukmaṅgada, and so the king went to the garden to have a look.

Seeing the Apsarā with a concerned look on her face, Rukmaṅgada asked, “What can I do to make you happy?” The Apsarā replied, “We often come to your garden to pick flowers. Yesterday was Ekādaśī, and eating *brinjal* is prohibited on that day. I stepped on a *brinjal* plant and a thorn pricked my foot. As a result, all my pious merit became exhausted so that I could not return to the heavenly planets. The only remedy for my misfortune would be if someone who had observed the vow of Ekādaśī yesterday formally offered the merit to me. In that way I would be able to return to my heavenly planet.”

Rukmaṅgada said, “What to speak of observing the vow of Ekādaśī, no one in my city has even heard of it.” The Apsarā said, “It may be that someone has unknowingly fasted yesterday. If you can find such a person and bring him to me so that he can offer me his pious merit, I will forever grateful.”

The king announced throughout the city: “Anyone who did not eat anything or drink anything yesterday should come to my royal court, for he will be rewarded.” After hearing this, a maidservant working in the house of a merchant came to the royal court. She had been beaten by the merchant, although she was faultless. Because of that, she had felt so distressed that she did not eat anything or drink anything throughout the entire day and night, and also did not sleep.

The king ordered the maidservant to offer

the pious merit obtained by fasting to the Apsarā. As a result, the celestial maiden immediately ascended into the sky on her way back to her heavenly planet. Thus understanding the importance of observing this vow, King Rukmaṅgada declared throughout his kingdom that from this day on it would be compulsory for all the citizens to observe the sacred vow of Ekādaśī. He announced, “If anyone eats grains on Ekādaśī, he will be arrested and punished with death.” Because of that declaration, all the people of the kingdom of Rukmaṅgada became pious and devoted to the Lord.

Now hear about another wonderful incident by which all the subjects of the kingdom returned to Vaikuṇṭha. King Rukmaṅgada’s daughter had firm faith in the vow of Ekādaśī. One day, while she was residing at the house of her father, her husband arrived. Since it was Ekādaśī, no one even thought about food or drink. However, the husband became very hungry and finally asked his wife for some food. Because it was Ekādaśī, she refused to give him anything.

The husband said, “I can no longer tolerate my thirst and hunger. I will die very soon if I don’t get some food.” The princess said, “Today is Ekādaśī and so what could be a better day to leave one’s body? Why are you afraid of death? If one gives up his body due to thirst and hunger on this day, his attainment of Vaikuṇṭha is guaranteed.”

The princess joyfully spoke like this and remained steady in her vow, and it so happened that because of receiving no

food, her husband left his body and was immediately transferred to *Vaikuṇṭha*. Seeing this, the heart of the princess became filled with love and devotion for the Supreme Lord. She soon thereafter also gave up her body and followed her husband to *Vaikuṇṭha*. The great sages therefore sing of her firm faith and determination.

❁ Hariścandra ❁

Now hear the narration about King *Hariścandra*, who was truthful throughout his entire life. Without feeling any distress, and without hesitation, he gave his entire kingdom in charity to the sage, *Viśvāmitra*, not keeping anything for himself. In this way he perfectly maintained his vow of giving charity. After thus renouncing his kingdom, he went to *Kāśī*, where he sold himself, along with his wife and son. In this way he remained fixed in truth and satisfied the Supreme Lord.

Suratha and *Sudhanvā* were two great devotees of the Lord. Once, the minds of the two *brāhmaṇas*, *Śaṅkha* and *Likhita*, became polluted, and they falsely accused *Suratha* and *Sudhanvā*. And as a result of this behavior, the two *brāhmaṇas* died.

Once, *Indra* and *Agni* assumed the forms of a falcon and pigeon and went to King *Śivī* to test if he was truly a protector of surrendered souls. To give protection to the surrendered pigeon, King *Śivī* cut off flesh from his body and gave it to the falcon in

exchange for its prey. Thus *Indra* and *Agni* understood that the king was indeed faithful in keeping his word, and a truly righteous king. The stories of King *Bharata* and the sage *Dadhici* are described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. These devotees offered their bodies, minds, wealth, and everything else for the service of the Lord and thus became dear to all the people of the world.

❁ Suratha and Sudhanvā ❁

Suratha was the king of *Kundalapura* and a staunch devotee of Lord *Rāmacandra*. In order to test his devotion, *Dharmarāja* came to him in the form of a devotee. King *Suratha* greeted him very respectfully and then requested him to speak something about the Supreme Lord so that he could benefit by hearing. The devotee, *Dharmarāja*, began describing the glories of *karma*, rather than glorifying *bhakti*. After listening for a few moments, the king said, “O *Mahārāja*, *bhakti* is superior to *karma*, or fruitive activities, because by the performance of *karma* one can at most attain the heavenly planets. And when one’s pious merit is exhausted, he has to return to this mortal world. But this is not the case with devotional service. One who is engaged in pure devotional service never returns to this material world.”

Hearing this, *Dharmarāja* became very pleased and asked *Suratha* to accept the benediction of his choice. The king offered his obsequies and asked for the benediction

that he would not leave his body without first having the *darśana* of Lord Rāmacandra. Dharmarāja granted this benediction and then disappeared from view.

Later on, when Lord Rāma performed a horse sacrifice, He sent Śatrughna, Hanumān, Aṅgada, Bharata, and Puṣkala to accompany the challenge horse. While wandering about, the horse finally arrived at Kuntalapura. King Suratha captured the horse and then defeated Śatrughna, Hanumān, Aṅgada, Bharata, and Puṣkala in battle and arrested them.

King Suratha said to his captives, “If you remember Lord Śrī Rāma, you will be freed from your confinement.” As soon as Hanumān remembered Rāmacandra, the Lord appeared and warmly embraced King Suratha, thus freeing His associates. Lord Rāma praised the king’s devotional attitude and his loyalty to *kṣatriya-dharma*.

Suratha and Sudhanvā were the sons of King Hamsadhvaja of Campāpurī. When King Hamsadhvaja heard that Yudhiṣṭhira was performing a horse sacrifice, and that Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were accompanying the challenge horse as it wandered over the earth, he captured the horse and prepared to fight with its protectors. Actually, he wanted to have the *darśana* of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Hamsadhvaja ordered his army to quickly prepare for battle. On the advice of his two priests, Śaṅkha and Likhita, he declared that anyone who would fail to arrive on time would be thrown into a pot of boiling oil. All of the soldiers arrived on time except

Sudhanavā, who was late because he had to meet his wife, Prabhāvatī. Śaṅkha and Likhita had ill feelings towards Sudhanvā because they once had a dispute about which was superior; *karma* or *bhakti*. So when they got this opportunity, Śaṅkha and Likhita went and informed Hamsadhvaja.

Thus Hamsadhvaja ordered his ministers to throw Sudhanvā into the pot of boiling oil. At that time, the devoted King Sudhanvā remembered his worshipable Lord and prayed, “My dear Lord, I am not afraid of death. My ardent desire is to die after being pierced by the arrows of Arjuna. First, I would like to surrender my life to You after having the *darśana* of Your lotus feet. Kindly fulfill my desire.”

After saying this, Sudhanvā began mediating on the Lord. As he was thrown into the pot, the boiling oil suddenly turned into cooling sandalwood paste so that Sudhanvā did not feel any pain. This transformation was not visible to others and so, because Sudhanvā did not die, a coconut was thrown into the oil to test if it was hot enough. The coconut shattered in two in such a way that it forcefully struck the foreheads of Śaṅkha and Likhita. Thus witnessing the wonderful potency of devotional service, both went on to become elevated devotees.

Thereafter, Sudhanvā fought fiercely with Arjuna. In that fight, Arjuna vowed, “If I cannot sever his head with these three arrows, then my ancestors’ pious merit will be destroyed so that they will fall into hellish conditions.” On the other side, Sudhanvā

vowed, "If I am not able to counteract your three arrows, then I will descend into hell."

In the course of battle, Sudhanvā cut Arjuna's arrows to pieces by the strength of Kṛṣṇa's holy name. Still, half of the last arrow flew through the air and cut off Sudhanvā's head, which fell at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa while chanting His holy name. An effulgent spark of light emanated from the body of Sudhanvā and merged into the body of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa hurled Sudhanvā's head high into the sky. Lord Śiva caught it and placed it in his garland of skulls.

When his brother, Sudhanavā was thus killed, the greatly devoted and valiant warrior, King Suratha, mounted his chariot and, along with a vast army, went and challenged Arjuna, saying, "O Pārtha! Be prepared to fight with me." A fierce battle took place between Arjuna and Suratha. Arjuna vowed, "I will kill you in front of your father." Suratha vowed, "I promise that you will fall down today on the battlefield."

After a long battle, Arjuna employed a special arrow, the *sarvadevamāyā*, and cut off Suratha's head. So as to make His devotee's words come true, Lord Kṛṣṇa enacted the pastime of Suratha's head bouncing into the air and hitting Arjuna in the forehead, making him fall to the ground unconsciousness. The head once again bounced and fell at the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa picked up Arjuna and placed him on his chariot. He then ordered Garuḍa to put the head of Suratha at Prayāga. Later on, Lord Śiva added that head to his garland

of skulls. Lord Kṛṣṇa then forged an alliance between Arjuna and Haṁsadhvaja.

❁ Bharata ❁

Saintly Mahārāja Bharata was the first of the incarnations of Godhead's, Ṛṣabhadeva's, one hundred sons. He was a great mystic *yogī* and was decorated with all godly qualities. The tract of land known as Ajanābha-varṣa became known as Bhārata-varṣa, being named after Mahārāja Bharata. Lord Ṛṣabhadeva gave him the responsibility of ruling the earth.

Mahārāja Bharata begot five talented sons from the womb of his wife, Pañcajanī, the daughter of Viśvarūpa. After giving up all his worldly duties, Mahārāja Bharata retired to the forest to perfect his spiritual life. One day, as he was sitting and chanting the holy names of the Lord after bathing in the Gaṇḍakī River and performing his daily worship, a pregnant deer came there to drink water. As she was drinking from the river, she suddenly heard the roar of a lion and so she jumped out of fear for her life. As a result, the embryo fell from her womb into the water of the Gaṇḍakī River.

Out of compassion, Mahārāja Bharata picked up baby deer and began taking care of it. Thereafter, the king became so attached to the small deer that he could not remain away from her for even a moment. This resulted in a slackening of his spiritual practices. Then it so happened that Mahārāja Bharata gave up

his body while thinking of the deer so that in his next life he had to accept the body of a deer, although he had the remembrance of his previous birth. He always thought of the Supreme Lord and gave up his deer body in the water of Gaṇḍakī River.

In his next life, Mahārāja Bharata took birth in a *brāhmaṇa* family in the dynasty from the sage, Aṅgīrasa. Having the remembrance of his previous lives, he behaved like a dull-headed person and so he was called Jaḍa Bharata. Although he acted dull and stunted so that he could remain aloof from material entanglement, within his mind he was always absorbed in thoughts of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. His body was very strong. Once, some dacoits arrested him and took him before their goddess Kālī as a sacrifice. Goddess Kālī, understanding Bharata's spiritual position, appeared from her deity and killed the dacoits.

Another time, Rahūgaṇa, the king of Sindhu and Sauvīra, was enroute to the āśrama of Kapiladeva, riding in a palanquin. One of the palanquin carriers became ill and so when the king's men saw Jaḍa Bharata, they forced him to carry the palanquin. Jaḍa Bharata carried the palanquin, but his steps were not even. Because he did not want to step on the ants that were crawling here and there, he repeatedly paused and then again started walking.

King Rahugāṇa became angry because his ride was not at all smooth and so he chastised Jaḍa Bharata with harsh words. The self-realized Jaḍa Bharata responded

by instructing the king in the science of self-realization. He said, "O King Rahugāṇa, without being smeared with the dust from the lotus feet of a saintly devotee, one cannot realize the Absolute Truth. The Absolute Truth cannot be realized simply by the performane of austerity, sacrifice, ritualistic activities, giving charity, service to guests, service to the poor, following *varṇāśrama-dharma*, study of the *Vedas*, or worship of the demigods.

❀ **Supremely liberal Dadhīci** ❀

The great sage Dadhīci was the son of the sage, Atharva, who was a son of Lord Brahmā. He was also known as Aśvaśīra. Once, Indra approached him to receive instructions of spiritual understanding. In the course of his instructions, Dadhīci condemned material sense gratification in a way that equated Indra with a dog. Indra protested by saying, "Mahārāja, you should not impart this knowledge to anyone else, for if you do so, I will cut off your head."

After some time, the Aśvinī-kumāras approached Dadhīci for learning the spiritual science. When Dadhīci told them what Indra had threatened, the Aśvinī-kumāras said, "Do not worry. We will cut off your head and put a horse's head on your shoulders. Then when Indra cuts off your head, we will put back your original head."

In this way, the twin Aśvinī-kumāras received spiritual knowledge from the sage,

Dadhici. Then when Indra cut off Dadhici's head, the Aśvinī-kumāras joined it again to the trunk of his body. As a result, both the horse and the sage Dadhici regained their lives.

After the demigods were defeated by Vṛtrāsura, they took shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Lord then instructed them to go to the sage Dadhici and prepare a thunderbolt from his bones. He assured them that Vṛtrāsura could be killed by that weapon. Indra approached Dadhici and begged for his bones. The greatly liberal Dadhici, understanding the importance of acting for the welfare of others, was willing to give up his body for this noble cause. Dadhici bathed, sat down in the *padmāsana*, and gave up his body. With the bones from the sage's body, a thunderbolt was made so that ultimately, the great demon, Vṛtrāsura, was killed. In this way the sage sacrificed his life for the benefit of others.

beggar, although You are the proprietor of innumerable universes. For me this was humiliating. I am very much pleased that You have smashed his pride by awarding him suitable punishment."

Alas! Just see how Queen Vindhyāvalī was fixed in devotional service to the Supreme Lord! Even when Lord Vāmana deceitfully took away the three worlds from Bali and gave it to his enemies, the demigods, and then arrested and insulted him, and threatened to send him to hell, Vindhyāvalī did not find any fault with Him, but rather found fault with her husband. If by the mercy of the Lord one comes to that standard of devotion, then whether he is a householder or a renunciate, he is not influenced by the three modes of material nature. Such a person is to be known as a liberated soul even in this life.

❁ Niladhvaja ❁

Wise and gentle Vindhyāvalī the wife of Bali

One does not often hear about such a devoted woman like Vindhyāvalī, the wife of Bali Mahārāja. She did not feel distressed when Lord Vāmana arrested her husband, but rather she felt very happy. While offering prayers to Lord Vāmana, she said, "My dear Lord, the king is Your servant. He thought that he was being very charitable, considering You to be an insignificant

Niladhvaja was the ruler of Māhiṣmatī. He had a powerful son named Pravīra. When Niladhvaja captured Yudhiṣṭhira's sacrificial horse, he fought a great battle with Arjuna.

Niladhvaja had given his daughter, Svāhā, in marriage to the fire-god, Agni. As the battle raged, he placed his son-in-law, Agni, on the tip of an arrow and released it at the Pāṇḍava army. As a result, countless warriors were burnt to ashes. Arjuna used a water weapon to counteract the fiery weapon of Niladhvaja, but it was not effective. Arjuna

next employed his Nārāyaṇa weapon, and this extinguished the *agni* weapon.

Arjuna said to Agni, “You had always protected us, and so why are you opposing us today?” Agni replied, “Helping Nīladvaja is a secondary reason for this. The principal reason is that you are striving for fame independently of the will of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You are looking for goat’s milk when you have the ocean of milk at your disposal. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is your dear friend and so you should have faith in Him and leave the burden of victory in His hands. Who could conquer Kṛṣṇa?”

Arjuna then made an alliance with Nīladvaja and engaged him in protecting the sacrificial horse. Nīladvaja put the rule of his kingdom in the hands of his son, Pravīra, and joined Arjuna. After hearing about Nīladvaja’s glory from the mouth of Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa affectionately embraced him.

❀ Moradvaja and Tāmradvaja ❀

Moradvaja was the king of Ratnanagara, and Tāmradvaja was his son. Both father and son were great devotees of the Lord. As a result, all the inhabitants of the kingdom were Vaiṣṇavas. Moradvaja was very fond of rendering service to saintly persons.

Once, in order to take advantage of the king’s service attitude towards saintly persons, some thieves arrived in the guise

of devotees. In the absence of the king, they mortally wounded the queen and stole all of his wealth. As the thieves were about to depart, the king returned home and saw them dressed as devotees. The king offered his respectful obeisances to the devotee-clad thieves and brought them into his palace. Out of fear, the thieves revealed their identities. Still, the king said, “No! You are not thieves, you are saintly persons.” Meanwhile, the queen regained consciousness. Seeing this wonder, the thieves felt ashamed and gave up their profession of stealing.

The Lord engaged his Sudarśaṇa *cakra* to give protection to King Moradvaja’s kingdom. Once, some messengers of Yamarāja arrived at his kingdom while wandering about here and there, but the Lord’s Sudarśaṇa *cakra* drove them away. When they returned to their master, they complained and so Yamarāja prayed to the Supreme Lord, Who then appeared and said, “Moradvaja is my dear devotee.” Then, to test the devotion of King Moradvaja, Dharmarāja assumed the form of a lion and the Supreme Lord took the form of a saintly person.

Once, when Moradvaja was performing eight horse sacrifices, he released the challenge horse under the protection of his son, Tāmradvaja. At that time, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira’s sacrificial horse, which was being protected by Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, was wandering at will near Maṇipura. When they came upon the horse, Tāmradvaja asked his minister, Bahuladvaja, to read

the declaration tied to the horse's head. In this way, he came to understand that this challenge horse belonged to Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira and so he captured it and prepared to fight. On one side were Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, and on the other side was King Tāmradhvaja.

With His *cakra*, Kṛṣṇa killed countless soldiers in Tāmradhvaja's army. King Tāmradhvaja then said, "My Lord, what You have done is very good, for now I will be able to see You more clearly. Because so many soldiers were in the way, I could not have Your *darśana*."

Still, Lord Kṛṣṇa induced Tāmradhvaja to fight and not talk so much. Kṛṣṇa was prepared to release His *cakra*, but Tāmradhvaja deftly caught hold of His right hand with his right hand, and with his left hand he grabbed Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet and touched them to his head.

By the order of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna showered one hundred arrows on Tāmradhvaja, but without caring for them, the king advanced and captured the son of Kuntī. When Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa managed to push Tāmradhvaja away, he fell but did not let them go. In the struggle, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna fell unconscious and so Tāmradhvaja retreated to some distance.

Moradhvaja then came to Tāmradhvaja with two horses. Hearing of his son's prowess, Moradhvaja became jubilant and decided to go to Kṛṣṇa to have His *darśana*. Meanwhile, when Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna regained consciousness, the Lord praised

the prowess of Tāmradhvaja before Arjuna. Arjuna was surprised to hear the Lord praise his enemy, and he was also amazed that such a young boy could defeat Him, along with all-powerful Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Realizing that Arjuna had become proud of his prowess, and proud of his intimate friendship with Him, Lord Kṛṣṇa had enacted this pastime. When Arjuna had become proud, thinking that he was a great devotee of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, being the Supersoul of everyone, understood his mind. Thus the Lord decided to remove His friend's pride.

Thinking like this, Lord Kṛṣṇa said to Arjuna, "There is a devotee of Mine I would like to introduce to you. I will take the form of an elderly *brāhmaṇa* and you will become a young *brāhmaṇa* boy when we go to see him."

In those forms, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna went to Moradhvaja's palace. They asked the servant, "Please go and inform the king of our arrival." The servant went inside the palace and informed the king, who then said, "Now I am rendering service to my Lord. Go and fall at their lotus feet and request them to kindly sit down and wait." The servant returned and repeated to the two *brāhmaṇas* what his master had said. When they heard this, the two *brāhmaṇas* became furious.

Both *brāhmaṇas* left the place in an angry mood, but the servant fell at their feet and implored them to return. The servant then went and informed the king of what had happened. When King Moradhvaja

heard this, he rushed to the where the two *brāhmaṇas* were seated and offered his obsequies. He then said, “I consider myself to be most fortunate today because you have been seen by me. Today my desire has become fulfilled. Now please order me. What can I do for you? Let me have the satisfaction of serving you. My eyes have become successful by seeing both of you great personalities. I wish to hear your nectarean words.”

After hearing the king’s sweet words, the *brāhmaṇas*’ anger subsided, and indeed, they became very pleased with him. Since they wanted to test King Moradhvaja, they said, “O King, you have promised to serve us in whatever way we desire. Is that true?”

The King replied, “I give my words that I will do whatever pleases you.” The elderly *brāhmaṇa* said, “While we were walking through the forest, we came upon a lion. The lion wanted to eat this young boy but I said to the lion that it should eat me instead. The lion said, ‘No! I like the flesh of a young boy.’ I tried to convince the lion to spare the young boy, and finally he said, ‘If you give me half of the body of King Moradhvaja, I will eat that flesh and spare the boy.’ ”

The Queen said, “I am the king’s better half and so offer me to the lion.” The king’s young son said, “It will be more pleasing to the lion if you offer my young flesh in place of that of the young *brāhmaṇa*.” The elderly *brāhmaṇa* said, “Listen to one more thing I forgot to tell you. The lion also said, ‘The body of King Moradhvaja should be cut into

two halves by his wife and son, using a saw. While the king’s body is being cut in half, he should not feel any distress; otherwise I will eat the *brāhmaṇa* boy.’ ”

Thus it came to be that the wife and son began cutting the king’s body in half. Starting from the head, as they cut down to his nose, a teardrop came from the king’s left eye. Seeing this, the elderly *brāhmaṇa* said, “The king is shedding tears because he is feeling distress and so the lion will refuse to eat his flesh.” After saying this, the elderly *brāhmaṇa* left in a displeased mood. Grabbing the elderly *brāhmaṇa*’s feet, the king said, “The tear came from my left eye because that portion of the body had become useless. The right side of the face is very fortunate.”

Hearing these words of the king, the elderly *brāhmaṇa*’s heart became filled with compassion. Both Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna then revealed themselves to the king. Lord Kṛṣṇa blessed King Moradhvaja and gave him His enchanting *darśana*. The king’s body became healed as if nothing had happened, and so all his distress vanished.

Desiring to award the king a benediction, Lord Kṛṣṇa said, “My dear King Moradhvaja, You have purchased Me by your profound sacrifice and devotion. In exchange for your wonderful sacrifice, there is nothing I can give you. Still, if I do not give you something, My heart will remain dissatisfied. Even if you ask for millions of benedictions and I grant them, I still could not repay you for what you have endured. Indeed, when I think about

the distress you endured, My heart becomes burdened and My mouth dries up.”

After hearing the Lord’s sweet speech, King Moradhvaja said, “My dear Lord, You are the most magnanimous personality. If someone does even a small thing for Your pleasure, You consider it to be very great and become indebted to him. If You really want to give me something then give me this benediction.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa said, “O King, just tell Me what you want.” King Moradhvaja said, “My dear Lord, kindly do not test Your devotees in the age of Kali.” Saying, “So be it,” Lord Kṛṣṇa departed with Arjuna. In this way Arjuna’s pride was vanquished by the mercy of the Lord.

❁ Alarka ❁

May I always remain absorbed in hearing and glorifying the transcendental qualities of the exalted devotee, Alarka. In this māterial world, even if one receives good instructions, his desire to enjoy sense gratification does not vanish. Alarka was the son of Maṇḍalaśā, who had taken a vow that anyone who would be born from her womb would never again have to enter a mother’s womb. That is to say, he should become free from the cycle of birth and death by cultivating attachment for the lotus feet of the Lord.

Maṇḍalaśā had four sons, three of whom accepted the renounced order of life and

went to the forest by the instruction of their mother. At the request of her husband, the youngest son, Alarka, was not instructed to give up worldly association and so he entered household life. Alarka’s mother wrote a small sheet of instructions, put it in an amulet, and gave it to him, saying, “When you face a great danger, open this and read the instructions.”

After installing Alarka upon the royal throne, Maṇḍalaśā and her husband went to the forest to worship the Supreme Lord. There they saw their other sons and were very pleased by their spiritual advancement. Still, Maṇḍalaśā was always worried about Alarka.

When Alarka did not feel even the slightest inclination toward renunciation, even after enjoying a life of unprecedented material happiness, his mother sent her younger sons to try and deliver him from material bondage. When the three brothers met Alarka, they imparted to him lengthy spiritual instructions, but they had no effect. The three brothers then went to their maternal uncle, the king of Kāśī, and encouraged him to attack Alarka’s kingdom.

A vast army thus surrounded Alarka’s capital, arriving from the four directions. When Alarka found himself in such a dangerous condition, he remembered the amulet given to him by his mother and opened it. When he read the note, he understood the material world to be insignificant and immediately left his kingdom and went to the forest. Having renounced everything, he

engaged in worshiping the Supreme Lord. In the forest he met Lord Dattātreyā, and after receiving instructions from Him, he very easily crossed the ocean of material existence to attain eternal residence in the spiritual world.

❀ **Text 12** ❀

May I respectfully hold on my head the particles of dust from the lotus feet of those devotees who have surpassed the influence of the Lord's illusory energy and are thus not entangled in her network of illusion. Ṛbhu, Īkṣvāku, Ela, Gādhi, Raghu, Raya, Gaya, Śatadhanavā, Amūrti, Rantideva, Uttāṅga, Bhūriśravā, Devala, Vaivaśvata Manu, Nahūṣa, Yayāti, Dilipa, Puru, Yadu, Guha, Māndhātā, Pippala, Nimi, Bharadvāja, Dakṣa, Śarabhaṅga, Sañjaya, Śamika, Uttānapāda, and Yājñavalkya—their transcendental glories are known throughout the world. By the prowess of devotional service to the Lord, they conquered over the influence of *māyā*.

❀ **Ṛbhu** ❀

Ṛbhu was a mind-born son of Brahmā. Although he was a detached knower of the Absolute Truth, he took instruction from his younger brothers, headed by Sanat-kumāra, for that is the etiquette prescribed by śāstra.

Ṛbhu imparted spiritual knowledge to his disciple, Nidāgha. According to another version, Ṛbhu was a *brāhmaṇa* by birth and worshiped Lord Śiva. Lord Śiva became pleased with him and requested him to accept a benediction. Ṛbhu was a young boy at this time. He said to Lord Śiva "I wish to have the *darśana* of the Supreme person who is greater than you."

By the request of Lord Śiva, Lord Hari appeared and gave Ṛbhu His *darśana*. Both Lord Hari and Lord Śiva gave Ṛbhu the benediction that he would be engaged in the loving devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. After granting this benediction, both disappeared from view.

❀ **Ikṣvāku** ❀

Marīci was a son of Brahmā, and his son was Kaśyapa, Kaśyapa's son was Vivasvān (Sūrya), Vivasvān's son was Śrāddhadeva Manu, and King Ikṣvāku was his son. It is said that he appeared from the nose. He as the first king of Ayodhyā, and he was very affectionate to his subjects. While speaking *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa referred King Ikṣvāku as the recipient of this knowledge millions of years ago, after the Lord had imparted it to the sun-god, Vivasvān. Lord Kṛṣṇa said, "I instructed this imperishable science of yoga to the sun-god, Vivasvān, and Vivasvān instructed it to Manu, the father of mankind, and Manu in turn instructed it to Ikṣvāku." King Ikṣvāku is thus an *ācārya* for teaching

the knowledge contained in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Lord Rāmacandra appeared in the dynasty of King Ikṣvāku.

❀ Ela ❀

Because Vaivasvata Manu had no son, his priest, the sage Vasiṣṭha, ordered him to perform a Mitra-varuṇa sacrifice. Manu's wife, Śraddhā, requested one of the *brāhmaṇas* offering oblations into the sacrificial fire to insure that she would receive a daughter. As a result, she received a daughter named Ilā. Later on, Vasiṣṭha, with the help of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, transformed Ilā into a boy, who was called Sudyumna.

One day, Sudyumna went to the forest to hunt. However, as soon as he entered the forest, he became transformed into a woman. (Lord Śiva had cursed anyone who would enter that forest to be transformed into a female). In this way, Sudyumna became the female named Ilā. When the moon-god's son, Budha, saw Ilā, he became attracted to her, and as a result he begot a son named Purūravā.

Being requested by the sage, Vasiṣṭha, Lord Śiva gave Ilā the benediction that she could regain her male form each alternate month. Since Budha's son, Purūravā, was born from the womb of Ilā, he became known as Ela. Being cursed by Mitrā and Varuṇa, the Apsarā, Urvaśī, became attracted to Pururavā after hearing from Nārada Muni about his

beauty, good qualities, exalted nature. Thus it came to be that Urvaśī began enjoying a conjugal relationship with Purūravā. When the duration of the curse was over, Urvaśī returned to the heavenly planets. Thereafter, Purūravā came to his senses and dedicated himself to spiritual advancement so that ultimately he was able to see the Lord within his heart. He is one of the great saintly kings who are to be remembered every morning.

❀ Gādhi ❀

Kuśa was a son of Brahmā, and his son was Kuśanābha. Kuśanābha performed a sacrifice for the purpose of getting a son, and as a result, he was blessed with a pious son named Gādhi, who became the King of Kānyakubja. Because Gādhi had no son, he performed a *soma* sacrifice and was blessed with a daughter named Satyavatī, who was later given in marriage to the great sage, Ṛcika. By the mercy of Ṛcika, King Gādhi had sons, headed by Viśvāmitra. King Gādhi maintained his subjects as if they were his own children. At the end of his life, he entrusted the kingdom to Viśvāmitra and retired to the forest to worship the Supreme Lord.

❀ Raghu ❀

King Raghu was the son of Emperor Dilipa

of the Ikṣvāku dynasty. He was devoted to the Supreme Lord, pious, brahminical in his behavior, very powerful, and affectionate to his subjects. Even the demigods sought his assistance.

Once, a *brāhmaṇa*, hoping to attain the same kind of opulence possessed by King Raghu, went to Kāśī to worship Lord Śiva. King Raghu gave his entire kingdom to that *brāhmaṇa*. Indeed, that supremely liberal king even engaged his queen in the service of the *brāhmaṇa* before retiring to the forest. In the forest, Raghu discovered a fruit that when eaten would return a person's youth. King Raghu went and gave the fruit to the *brāhmaṇa*. However, the suspicious *brāhmaṇa* did not eat the fruit, but instead threw it away, considering it to be poison.

Meanwhile, an aged man who had been depressed about his old age and had decided to commit suicide ate the fruit and his body transformed into that of a youth. When the *brāhmaṇa* heard about this, he sorely repented his foolishness and asked King Raghu for another magical fruit. The Lord appeared to Raghu and said, "O King, send the *brāhmaṇa* to Vaikuṇṭha." Thus, by the order of the Lord, the king gave the *brāhmaṇa* another fruit which not simply awarded him youth, but made him ascend to Vaikuṇṭha. This having been accomplished, King Raghu resumed rule his kingdom on the order of the Lord.

Once, King Raghu performed a *viśvajīta* sacrifice after which he gave everything in his possession in charity to the *brāhmaṇas*

and then once again retired to the forest. Kautsa, a disciple of the sage, Vartantu, approached Raghu, hoping that the king would give him *guru-dakṣiṇā*. Seeing that King Raghu was without any possessions and living in the forest, he prepared to return home. Raghu asked Kautsa the reason for his visit, and when he learned the truth, he chastised Kuvera because he had nothing to offer as *guru-dakṣiṇā*. Then suddenly there was a shower of gold coins from the sky. Kautsa accepted fourteen million gold coins as his *guru-dakṣiṇā*. Even today there are gold mines in and around that place.

Rāvaṇa was always fearful because he had witnessed King Raghu's prowess and influence. Lord Rāmacandra is known as Raghuvamśī because He belonged to the dynasty of Raghu. King Raghu's son was Aja. Aja's son was Daśaratha, and Daśaratha's son was Lord Rāmacandra.

❀ Raya ❀

King Raya was the son of King Ela and Ūrvaśī. It is said in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that from the womb of Ūrvaśī, six sons were born—Āyu, Śrutāyu, Satyāyu, Raya, Vijaya, and Jaya. Among these six sons, King Raya was a foremost devotee of the Supreme Lord, and as a result of his rendering service to the lotus feet of the Lord, he was liberated from material existence.

❁ **Gaya** ❁

In the dynasty of the saintly King Bharata, there was a king named Nakta, who begot a saintly boy named Pravara in the womb of his wife, Dutī. When he grew up and ascended the royal throne, he maintained his subjects as if they were his own children. He was fixed in thinking of the Supreme Lord, and was a self-realized soul. He had no material desires, but still he was blessed with all kinds of opulence. The Supreme Lord appeared at his sacrificial arena and personally received his worship and gifts.

In the *Gayā Māhātmya* section of the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, there is the story of a demon named Gaya, in whose body the holy place known as Gayā was situated. This demon was one hundred and twenty-five *yojanas* tall and sixty *yojanas* wide. By his severe austerities he satisfied the three Lords; Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśa. Gaya requested, “May I become more sanctified than the demigods, *brāhmaṇas*, holy places of pilgrimage, and sacrifices, so that anyone who takes *darśana* of me or touches me will immediately become purified.”

The three Lords granted Gaya this benediction and then vanished from view. Because he was such a blessed personality, people would visit his holy place of pilgrimage and become so purified that after death, they would attain the heavenly planets. As a result of this, there was a commotion in the abode of Yamarāja (because all were attaining the heavenly planets so that practically none

had to suffer the torments of hell).

Later on, Lord Brahmā approached Gaya and asked that his body might be used as a platform on which to perform a sacrifice. For this purpose, Lord Brahmā requested Gaya to lie down in the sacrificial arena. When the sacrifice was completed, Gaya began moving, but Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśa sat on his body while requesting him to accept a benediction. The demon, Gaya, said, “The benediction I desire is that all of the demigods will reside in my body. If this is not granted, I will stand up. In addition, may the holy place of pilgrimage known as Gayā be named after me. May the forefathers of those who offer oblations to them at Gayā be delivered.” These benedictions were granted.

❁ **Śatadhanvā** ❁

King Satrājīt’s brother, Śatadhanvā, was a simple-minded person. He had great affection for his brother and he had great faith in Lord Kṛṣṇa. The author of this book has described him as pure-hearted Śatadhanvā. Being instigated by Kṛtavarmā and others, King Satrajit was killed by Śatadhanvā, for they desired to possess the Syamantaka jewel. When her father was killed, Satyabhāmā informed Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, who displayed sadness like ordinary men, for They were enjoying transcendental pastimes after assuming human-like forms.

Kṛṣṇa chased Śatadhanvā and was prepared to kill him. When Śatadhanvā had approached Kṛtavarmā and others for help, they had flatly refused to give him protection and so he mounted a swift horse and fled. When he was near the city of Mithilā, his horse fell down due to exhaustion and so Śatadhanvā proceeded on foot. It was then that Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who was chasing him, cut off his head with His Sudarśaṇa *cakra*. The spirit soul of Śatadhanvā merged into the body of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

❁ Amūrṭi ❁

Amūrṭi was a saintly king. His father was king Kuśa, a son of Brahmā. King Amūrṭi established the city of Dharmāranya, near Gayā. It is said that the offering of oblations to the forefathers at Dharmāranya bestows great benefit.

❁ Rantideva ❁

Alas! Glorious are the characteristics of exalted devotees! King Rantideva was one such glorious devotee of the Supreme Lord. He was born in the family of King Duṣyanta. After ruling his kingdom for a long period of time, King Rantideva, along with his queen and daughter, left home and went to the forest. In the forest, Rantideva completely depended on the Supreme Lord for his

maintenance. He was such a merciful soul that he could not tolerate anyone's hunger. He would give whatever he had to a hungry person. He never refused anyone's appeal for help. As a result of living an austere life, Rantideva's body became thin and weak, although within, he always remembered the Supreme Lord.

Once, he passed forty-eight days without eating—subsisting only on water. Thereafter, by the arrangement of the Lord, he received some nice food. When the three were about to have their meal, a *brāhmaṇa* guest arrived and so King Rantideva respectfully fed him to his full satisfaction. After the departure of the *brāhmaṇa*, a hungry *śūdra* arrived and so Rantideva offered him some of his food. Thereafter, a dog appeared at the door, whining for some food. Out of compassion, King Rantideva gave the rest of the food to the dog so that there was nothing left except some water. Just when he was about to take a drink, a tribal forest dweller came and said, "O King, you are very kind and generous. I have been thirsty for quite some time and so please give me some water." King Rantideva gave the water to that man, for he could perceive his worshipable Lord within the *brāhmaṇa*, the *śūdra*, the dog-eater, and the dog.

When King Rantideva had thus finished serving all his guests, the Supreme Personality of Godhead appeared before him. Actually, it was the Supreme Lord who had come to King Rantideva in these various forms, just to test his exalted personality.

When the Lord tempted Rantideva to ask for a benediction, the king refused to accept any kind of material happiness, for he considered such things to be insignificant. He said, “My dear Lord, may You give me all the miseries of the conditioned souls so that I can suffer in their place.” Such was Rantideva’s concern for the welfare of all living entities.

❁ Utaṅka ❁

Utaṅka was a great ascetic, and a faithful servant of his spiritual master. He was a disciple of the sage, Gautama, and was highly enlightened in spiritual knowledge. By the order of the wife of his spiritual master, he begged for celestial earrings from Madayantī, the queen of Saudāsa. As he was returning with the earrings, a huge serpent swallowed them and so he went to the planet of the Nāgas to retrieve them. He received spiritual knowledge and engagement in devotional service from Lord Kṛṣṇa. He was endowed with the quality of forgiveness. Once, he forgave a female hunter named Kanikā, even though she had committed an offence. Not only did he forgive her, he convinced her to become a devotee of the Lord.

❁ Bhūriśravā ❁

King Bhūriśravā appeared in the Kuru dynasty as the son of Somadatta. He was present during Draupadī’s *svayamvara* and Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira’s Rājasūya sacrifice. He had great love and devotion for Lord Kṛṣṇa. He was killed by Sātyakī in the battle of Kurukṣetra and in his next life became a Viśvadeva.

❁ Devala ❁

Devala was the son of a Vasu named Pratyūṣa, and he became a celebrated sage. He was recognized as one of the authorized knowers of the spiritual science. He was the elder brother of Dhaumya, and was present in the assembly at King Janamejaya’s snake sacrifice.

Devala had a daughter named Suvarcalā, who vowed to marry only a man who was blind, but still able to see. After some time, the sage Uddalaka’s son, Śvetaketu, approached Devala and said, “I have no connection with the eyes through which I see the material world. In other words, with my gross eyes I cannot see the subtle forms of the spirit soul and the Supersoul. Therefore, even though I have eyes, I am actually blind. But since I have spiritual eyes by which I can perceive the Supersoul, I can also see.” Thereafter, Devala arranged for the marriage of his daughter, Suvarcalā, with Śvetaketu.

❀ **Vaivasvata Manu** ❀

Viśvakarmā's daughter, Samjñā, was the wife of Sūrya, and Vaivasvata Manu was born from her womb. He is called Vaivasvata because he was the son of Vivasvān. He is the seventh among the fourteen Manus who appear in a day of Brahmā. He is the current Manu.

❀ **Nahūṣa** ❀

King Nahūṣa was an illustrious, powerful, pious, and charitable personality. When the King of the demigods, Indra, killed Vṛtrāsura, he became afraid of incurring the sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa* and so he hid within the water. Being bereft of a leader, the sages empowered King Nahūṣa and installed him on the throne of Indra. However, Nahūṣa became attracted to Indra's wife and ordered her to come to his palace. Indra's wife went to see the spiritual master of the demigods, Bṛhaspati, and took shelter of him. Bṛhaspati advised her to request King Nahūṣa to come to her while riding in a palanquin carried by great sages.

Indrāṇī did exactly as Bṛhaspati had instructed so that King Nahūṣa went to her palace while sitting on a palanquin carried by great sages. Proud and arrogant Nahūṣa chastised the sages, demanding that they hurry, and even kicked Agastya Muni. In retaliation, of the great sage, Agastya, cursed King Nahūṣa to become a python for ten thousand years.

Being thus cursed, King Nahūṣa regained his good sense, and with humility he begged for forgiveness. Agastya then said, "My curse cannot be retracted, but in the future, when you are questioned, if you answer correctly, you will give up your serpent's body and regain your natural form."

While living in exile, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira posed some questions and Nahūṣa in the form of a python answered them and was thus delivered so that he regained his celestial form and returned to the heavenly planets.

❀ **Yayāti** ❀

Yayāti was the second son of King Nahūṣa. He begot two sons, Yadu and Turvasu, from the womb of his wife, Devayāni, and begot Druhyu, Anu, and Puru from the womb of another wife, Śarmiṣṭhā. Because of Śukrācārya's curse, Yayāti, who was very lusty for enjoying sense gratification with his wife, became prematurely afflicted with old age. Śukrācārya told Yayāti that if one of his sons would exchange his youth for his old age, he could continue enjoying sense gratification.

Yayāti requested his sons to give him their youthfulness, but they all refused. As a result, he became angry and denied them their shares of inheritance. Then the youngest son, Puru, accepted the order of his father and because of this, he became the next king. After enjoying life for one thousand years,

Yayāti became detached from a materialistic life of sense gratification and so he returned his youth to Puru and retired to the forest.

Thereafter, when Yayāti attained the heavenly planets, he indulged in proudly praising himself for his piety and so Indra ejected him. This is the result of boasting about one's piety, for this causes one to lose all his pious merit. Later on, by the prowess of the sage, Aṣṭaka, the son of his daughter, Mādhavī, Yayāti was reinstated in the heavenly kingdom.

❁ **Dilipa** ❁

Dilipa was the son of Amṣumān, and the ruler of Ayodhyā. He was such a powerful king that even Indra, the King of the demigods, sometimes sought his help. He once took part in a great battle between the demigods and demons. As he was returning victoriously from the battlefield, he met a *surabhi* cow, but due to pride he failed to offer her any respect. Being offended, the *surabhi* cow cursed Dilipa to not have a son. But she also said that if her son were to bless him, then he might receive a son. By the mercy of the sage, Vasiṣṭha, his *surabhi* cow, Nandinī, blessed Dilipa and so he received a son named Raghu.

❁ **Puru** ❁

The Paurava dynasty began with Puru, the youngest son of King Yayāti. He was always very respectful to his elders and spiritual masters. He was very devoted and obedient to his father. Many saintly kings and great sages appeared in his dynasty.

❁ **Yadu** ❁

Yadu was the first son of King Yayāti, having been born from the womb of Devayāni. The Yadu dynasty, or Yādavas, began from Yadu, and indeed, Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared in this dynasty. Yadu was a very religious and pious king. King Yadu received transcendental knowledge from Lord Dattātreya, so that he became liberated in this very life.

❁ **Guha** ❁

Guha was the king of the Bhīla tribe, who were also known as Niṣādas, ruling his kingdom from Śringaverapura, which was situated on the shore of Gaṅgā. He had great love and devotion for Lord Rāmacandra. When Lord Rāma was exiled to the forest, Guha approached Him and prayed, "My dear Lord, the kingdom of Śringaverapura is Yours. Kindly stay here as our ruler and thus bless Your servant."

Lord Rāmacandra replied, "I have given

up all objects of comfort by the order of my father. Indeed, I am not even allowed to enter a city.” Thereafter, when Lord Rāma departed for the forest, Guha became overwhelmed by unbearable grief as tears flowed from his eyes. In fact, he cried so much throughout the entire day and night that blood came from his eyes instead of tears. Who can properly describe Guha’s pathetic condition? He closed his eyes so that he would not see anything more in this lifetime. When people asked him about this, he would reply, “Who should I see except my Lord Rāma?”

How glorious is a devotee of the Supreme Lord! The author admits that the love and devotion displayed by Guha is so deeply rooted in his heart that he continued to remember him, again and again.

After completing His exile, when Lord Rāma was returning to Ayodhyā, some friends of Guha informed him, saying, “Now that your Lord has returned you should go and see him.” At first Guha could not believe them, as he was so overwhelmed by grief in separation. But then he asked, “Will I ever see Lord Rāma again? Am I so fortunate?”

Meanwhile, Lord Rāmacandra arrived and embraced Guha in ecstatic love. The Lord said, “I have returned and so open your eyes and see Me.” Guha recognized his Lord and they exchanged loving embraces. Guha felt that he was drowning in an ocean of transcendental happiness, as if he had regained his life. The King of the Niṣādas considered himself most fortunate. It is

not common to find such loving exchanges between the Supreme Lord and His devotees.

❀ Mandhātā ❀

King Yuvanāśva of the Ikṣvāku dynasty had no son and so he requested the sages to perform a sacrifice for the pleasure of Indra in the hopes of receiving one. One night, when the king was very thirsty, he mistakenly drank the water that had been empowered by the chanting of *mantras*. Understanding this to be the will of the Lord, the sages cut open Yuvanāśva’s abdomen and delivered a male child. As the child was crying, the sages thought, “This child must be hungry and so he needs milk, but whose milk should he drink?” Indra said, “Let him drink my milk.” After saying this, Indra placed his right index finger into the child’s mouth. Because Indra sustained his life, the child became known as Mandhātā. Later on, Māndhātā became the emperor of the entire world. He performed many grand sacrifices and gave ample charity while worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The exalted devotee, Mucukunda, was his son.

❀ Pippalāda ❀

Pippalāda was the son of the great sage, Dadhīci. When Dadhīci donated his bones to Indra, the sage’s wife, Suvarcā,

wanted to accompany her husband to the next world. But a voice from the sky declared, “Do not think of following your husband, for the power of that sage is present within your womb.” As soon as she heard this, Suvarcā tore open her womb, and after placing the child under a *pippala*, or banyan tree, she departed along with her husband. Since the banyan tree took care of the child, he was later on given the name Pippalāda. Pippalāda performed severe austerities in the shade of that banyan tree for the benefit of people in general. According to him, observing the vow of celibacy is the highest form of spiritual practice. He was born as a plenary portion of Lord Śiva. Even today, the place where that banyan tree was located is known as Pippala-tīrtha and Aśvattha-tīrtha.

❖ Nimi ❖

King Nimi was a son of King Ikṣvāku. He established a city named Vaijayanta near the āśrama of the sage, Gautama, from where he ruled his kingdom. Once, King Nimi asked Vasiṣṭha to perform a sacrifice that would last for one thousand years, but the sage was already engaged in performing a sacrifice for Indra. Understanding the temporary nature of the material body, King Nimi did not wait, but requested other sages, headed by Gautama, to officiate in the performance of his sacrifice.

When Vasiṣṭha came to know that Nimi had engaged other sages to perform

his sacrifice, he became angry and cursed the king to give up his body. In response, Nimi cursed Vasiṣṭha to give up his body. At the end of the sacrifice, when the demigods happily gave Nimi the benediction of regaining his body, the king instead requested, “May I live in the blinking of the eyes.” From that time onwards, eyes began to blink.

King Nimi’s body was churned, and from the churning there appeared a young boy. Because he was born from the churning, he was named Janaka, and because he was born from the dead body of his father, he was called Vaideha, and because he was born while the sages were churning, he was also known as Mithila. It was he who established the city of Mithilā. In his dynasty there appeared a great king also named Janaka who became the father of Sitā, the wife of Lord Rāmacandra.

❖ Bhāradvāja ❖

The sage Bhāradvāja was born from the semen of Bṛhaspati, the brother of Utathya, from the womb of Utathya’s wife, Mamatā. Utathya was born in the dynasty of the sage, Aṅgirā, who was the protector of many Vedic *mantras*. Bhāradvāja resided near Prayāga. During His exile, Lord Rāmacandra stayed at his āśrama for one night. Lord Rāma had inquired from Bhāradvāja about how to best live in the forest.

When Bharata went to the forest to

meet Lord Rāma in the hopes of making Him return to Ayodhyā, he also stayed at Bhāradvāja's āśrama for one night. There is a recorded conversation between the two sages, Bhāradvāja and Yājñavalkya. Bhāradvāja was a disciple of the great sage, Vālmiki, and he studied the *Vedas* from the sun-god for eleven thousand years. He was the compiler of *smṛti* literature, and the knower of past, present, and future. He engaged in inquiring about and then resolving the meanings of various spiritual subjects. He was very fond of hearing discussions of the Supreme Lord.

❀ Dakṣa ❀

Prajāpati Dakṣa was born from Lord Brahmā's thumb. Prasūti, the daughter of Svāyambhuva Manu, was his wife. As a result of his austerities, he was blessed with a daughter named Satī, who was married to Lord Śiva. In order to expand the population of the universe, he married Asiknī, the daughter of Prajāpati Pañcajanya, and begot in her ten thousand sons referred to as the Haryaśvas. Nārada Muni convinced these sons of Dakṣa to accept the renounced order of life. Dakṣa next begot one thousand sons who were referred to as the Savalāśvas. Again Nārada Muni came and convinced them to dedicate their lives for achieving life's ultimate goal. The Savalāśvas followed their elder brothers so that instead of helping their father expand the population of the universe, they accepted the renounced

order of life.

Thereafter, Dakṣa begot twenty-four daughters in the womb of Prasūti for the expansion of the universal population. In consideration of this, Lord Brahmā made him the leader of the Prajāpatīs. His daughter, Satī, was married to Śaṅkara. Later on, being very proud of his position, he arranged for a sacrifice just to humiliate Lord Śiva. However, the end result was that Lord Śiva destroyed Dakṣa's sacrifice and punished him by cutting off his head. Prajāpati Dakṣa had to give up that body and take another birth from the womb of Māriṣā, the wife of the Pracetās. Lord Brahmā again made him the leader of the progenitors. He received this name because he was very *dakṣa*, or expert, in performing ritualistic ceremonies. He worshiped the Supreme Lord by creating progeny.

❀ Śarabhaṅga ❀

The greatly ascetic Śarabhaṅga once foiled the arrow of Cupid, who had been dispatched by Indra. From that day on he became known as Śarabhaṅga, or the breaker of the arrow. His activities are described in the Rāmāyaṇa, as he was a great devotee of Lord Rāma.

❀ Sañjaya ❀

Sañjaya was the learned son of a śūdra

named Gavalgaṇa, a minister of King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Because he was a strict follower of religious principles, he favored the Pāṇḍavas, even though he was a minister in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's royal assembly. Indeed, he was never afraid of using harsh language when it was needed to check the irreligious activities of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his sons. By the mercy of his spiritual master, Vyāsadeva, he was given divine vision so that he was able to inform the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra of all that was happening during the battle at Kurukṣetra. The instructions of *Bhagavata-gītā* given by Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna were heard by Sañjaya, and he also witnessed Kṛṣṇa's universal form, and four-armed form. As stated at the end of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Sañjaya predicted the victory of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna even before the battle began.

❖ Śamīka ❖

The greatly ascetic Śamīka resided at a cowshed and maintained his life by drinking the milk that fell from the mouths of the calves. He continually performed austerities. He was a self-controlled, tolerant, charitable, and forgiving devotee.

Once, Mahārāja Parikṣit garlanded Śamīka with a dead snake, but the sage was absorbed in *samādhi* so that he did not even notice this. Later on, his son, Śṛṅgi, cursed Mahārāja Parikṣit to die in seven days after being bitten by the serpent, Takṣaka.

Śamīka felt aggrieved because of this curse and so, desiring the king's welfare, he sent the news to him through one of his disciples, Gauramukha.

❖ Uttānapāda ❖

Uttānapāda was the son of Svāyambhuva Manu and a great personality. He was the father of Dhruva Mahārāja.

❖ Yājñavalkya ❖

Yājñavalkya was an incarnation of Lord Brahmā. Once, while performing a sacrifice, he invited Gāyatrī-devī to participate instead of his wife, Sāvitrī-devī. Feeling insulted, Sāvitrī-devī cursed him.

Later on, he was born as the same Yājñavalkya in the family of the sage, Cāraṇa. He studied the *Yayur-veda Samhitā* from Vaiśampāyana, and the *R̥g-veda Samhitā* from the sage, Vāskala. When Vaiśampāyana became displeased, he vomited the *Yayur-veda* and other sages took the forms of partridges and accepted the beautiful *mantras*. Later on, Yājñavalkya studied the *Vedas* from Sūrya, the sun-god, who had assured him, saying, "If anyone challenges you or debates with you unnecessarily, his head will crack." The sage, Śākalya, ridiculed Yājñavalkya and as a result, his head cracked.

❀ **Text 13** ❀

I take shelter of the lotus feet of King Nimi and the Nava-yogendras. Kavi, Havi, and Karabhājana are like oceans of mercy. Antrarikṣa and Camasa are the foremost of those who render service to the Supreme Lord. Prabhuddha is a storehouse of love of Godhead. Avirhotra is the bestower of spiritual knowledge and devotional service. Pippalāyana and Drumila are just like boats for the conditioned souls to cross the ocean of material existence. These nine sons of Lord Rṣabhadeva and his wife, Jayantī, dispel the pains of material existence for those who take shelter of them.

❀ **Text 14** ❀

May the nine *ācāryas* who oversee the processes of devotional service shower their mercy upon their servants, including us. Intelligent King Parikṣit is the *ācārya* of hearing, which is one of the nine processes of devotional service. Vyāsadeva's son, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, is the *ācārya* of chanting, Prahlaḍa Mahārāja is the *ācārya* for remembering, and Goddess Lakṣmī is the *ācārya* of serving the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, twenty-four hours a day. King Pṛthu is the *ācārya* of worshiping the Lord according to the prescribed rules and regulations, and Śvaphalka's son, Akrūra, is the *ācārya* for offering prayers. Hanumān is the *ācārya* of devotional service in the

mood of servitorship, Arjuna is the *ācārya* of devotional service in the mood of friendship, and Bali Mahārāja is the *ācārya* of those who have surrendered everything unto the Lord.

I take shelter of the glorious names of the *ācāryas* of the nine processes of devotional service. That is to say, I sustain my life simply by chanting their holy names. These personalities deliver the conditioned living entities from their degraded conditions, hellish mentalities, and aversion to God. It is only possible to render devotional service by the mercy of these exalted devotees.

❀ **Mahārāja Parikṣit** ❀

There are many devotees who are attached to hearing the wonderful glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and by doing so, they experience unlimited pleasure. Among such devotees, Mahārāja Parikṣit is the foremost. The more he heard the nectrean topics of the Supreme Lord, the more his thirst for hearing increased. The very Lord Kṛṣṇa who is difficult to capture within the heart by the best of sages through meditation was seen by Mahārāja Parikṣit while within the womb of his mother.

While hearing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Mahārāja Parikṣit said to Śukadeva Gosvāmī, "My life and soul is becoing merged in the topics of the Supreme Lord so that now I have no fear whatsoever of death resulting from a snake bite. If you wish, you can test me."

Śukadeva Gosvāmī understood that the king's intelligence was fixed upon hearing the glorious narrations of the Supreme Lord, and that he had absolute faith and attachment for hearing. On the seventh day, when Śukadeva Gosvāmī concluded his recitation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Mahārāja Parikṣit gave up his mortal body.

❁ Śukadeva Gosvāmī ❁

Immediately upon emerging from the womb of his mother, Śukadeva Gosvāmī left home and entered the forest, where he began to worship the Supreme Lord. Even when his father, Vyāsadeva, called him again and again out of love and affection, Śukadeva did not respond. But when Vyāsadeva's disciples recited a verse from the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Śukadeva had a change of heart, being attracted by the Lord's wonderful transcendental qualities. Surprisingly, although at first he did not even answer his father, after hearing this verse from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Śukadeva Gosvāmī approached Vyāsadeva, accepted initiation from him, and studied Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam under his guidance. Śukadeva's heart was filled with thought of Lord Kṛṣṇa's wonderful beauty and transcendental qualities.

Thereafter, while wandering in the forest, immersed in his ever-increasing ecstatic mood, Śukadeva Gosvāmī happened to arrive at an assembly of sages on the shore of

the River Gaṅgā. The sages had been invited by Mahārāja Parikṣit for assisting him in his departure from this present body. Out of compassion, Śukadeva agreed to deliver Mahārāja Parikṣit by reciting the glorious Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

When the saintly Mahārāja Parikṣit had asked the assembled sages to describe the means for becoming delivered within seven days, they offered various means for attaining liberation. However, they could not decisively determine the best path for the aspiring king. At that time, Śukadeva Gosvāmī arrived upon the scene, chanting about the wonderful qualities of the Supreme Lord with utmost love and devotion. It appeared as if the bliss derived from the mellows of devotional service was constantly being showered from his mouth.

❁ Prahlāda Mahārāja ❁

Prahlāda Mahārāja perfected his life by continuously remembering the Supreme Lord. He understood that the one Supreme Lord is present everywhere among the moving and non-moving living entities so that no weapon could possibly cut Him to pieces. He could see the presence of the Supreme Lord everywhere. The power of a sword to cut, and the power that allows the drowning of a person in water, comes from the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

When Prahlāda's father, Hiranyakaśipu, asked, "Where is your protector-God?"

Prahlāda had replied, “He is everywhere.” At this, Hiranyakaśipu challenged, “Then why is He not seen in this pillar?” Prahlāda mildly replied, “I can see the Lord in this pillar.” Upon hearing this, Hiranyakaśipu became very angry, and with his fist he struck the pillar, as if by doing so he could kill the Lord.

Thereafter, a fierce-looking form of a half-man and half-lion appeared from the pillar. The Lord appeared in this way just to make the words of His devotee prove true. Thereafter, the Lord killed Hiranyakaśipu by tearing open his abdomen and placing the intestines around His neck as a garland. Even after killing the demon in such a dramatic manner, the Lord’s anger was not appeased, and so He did not appear peaceful. In that situation, no one knew what to do.

Seeing Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva’s formidable form, all the demigods, headed by Brahmā, became exceedingly frightened, for they had never seen such an angry form of the Lord before. Out of fear, nobody dared approach the Lord. What to speak of others, even Lakṣmī was afraid to go near the Lord. Finally Brahmā sent Prahlāda to pacify the Lord. Seeing the beautiful form of Nṛsiṃhadeva, Prahlāda became filled with great ecstatic love. When he approached the Him, Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva picked up young Prahlāda and placed him on His lap while caressing his head with His lotus-like hand. Being touched by the Lord’s lotus hand, Prahlāda’s heart became filled with and indescribable joy. He

then offered wonderful prayers to the Lord.

Thereafter, when Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva repeatedly asked Prahlāda to accept a benediction, Prahlāda felt compassion for all the conditioned souls. He begged for this benediction: “O Lord! Kindly deliver all the living entities who are entangled in the bondage of *māyā*. Your illusory energy has covered the knowledge of all the people within Your creation.” Prahlāda was very ardent in this request.

❀ Bali Mahārāja ❀

Bali Mahārāja offered everything with love and devotion to Lord Vāmana. His heart became filled with the ecstatic symptoms of pure devotional service. He remembered his grandfather, Prahlāda Mahārāja, who was an exalted devotee of the Lord. Prahlāda Mahārāja passed through many dangers, but Bali Mahārāja had never experienced any kind of difficulty.

Bali Mahārāja’s spiritual master, Śukrācārya, gave him ill advice: “This dwarf beggar is not a *brahmacārī*, He is actually the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu in disguise. He will assume a gigantic form and take away everything from you. There is no sin if one tells a lie when his very livelihood is in danger.”

However, this suggestion had no impact on Bali Mahārāja. Even though Śukrācārya tried to frighten Bali, saying that this young

boy would not allow him to remain in this world, the king promised Vāmanadeva that he would give Him three steps of land in charity.

Bali Mahārāja fulfilled his promise and gave the Lord three steps of land. With the first two steps, the Lord covered the earthly and heavenly planets and then said, “Where shall I place My third step? You promised to give Me three steps of land, and yet I have covered everything with two. If you do not keep your word then you will have to go to hell as punishment.”

Even after being chastised by the Lord in this way, the king’s intelligence did not become perplexed. Bali Mahārāja replied, “My Lord! Kindly place your third step upon my head.” Being pleased by this mood of complete surrender by Bali Mahārāja, the Lord became so pleased that He agreed to become the doorkeeper of His devotee. The Lord thus accepted defeat and became subordinate to Bali. The wonderful nature of Bali’s devotional service to the Supreme Lord is described by Śukadeva Gosvāmī in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

❁ **Text 15** ❁

The following sixteen devotees who always relish the nectrean mellows of the Supreme Lord’s devotional service are the topmost. These exalted devotees are Śaṅkara, Śukadeva; the four sons of Brahmā, headed by Śanaka; Kapila, Nārada, Hanumān,

Viṣvaksena, Prahlāda, Bali, Bhīṣma, Ambariṣa, Dhurva, Vibhīṣaṇa, Akrūra, and Uddhava. They are well-known throughout the entire world, and they possess supreme glory. They are truly recipients of the Lord’s mercy. They understand the real nature of the Lord’s mercy, and they always take pleasure in describing it. Therefore one should always offer the remnants of the Lord’s foodstuff to these exalted souls.

❁ **Text 16** ❁

I take shelter of the lotus feet of those devotees who have captured the four-armed form of the Supreme Lord within their hearts. Such devotees are always our protectors. They are the sages, Agastya, Pulastya, Pulaha, Cyavana, Vasiṣṭha, Saubharī, Kardama, Atri, R̥cika, Garga, Gautama, Vyāsa, Vyāsa’s disciples, Lomaśa, Bhṛgu, Gālabhya, Aṅgīrā, R̥ṣyaśṛṅga, Māṇḍava, Viśvāmitra, Durvāsā; the eighty-eight thousand sages, headed by Śaunaka; Jābālī, Jamadagni, Mārkaṇḍeya, Kaśyapa, Parvata, and Parāśara. I take the dust from their lotus feet and smear it upon my head. These foremost sages are greatly ascetic. In order to dissipate the darkness of ignorance, they enlighten people with transcendental knowledge in a spirit of devotion.

❀ Text 17 ❀

There are eighteen *Purāṇas*. Seventeen of these *Purāṇas* are said to be the *sādhana*, or process for achieving the goal of life, whereas the eighteenth *Purāṇa*, known as Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, is the *sādhya*, or ultimate goal of life. These *Purāṇas* are known as Brahma, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Liṅga, Padma, Skanda, Vāmana, Matsya, Varāha, Agni, Kūrma, Garuḍa, Nārada, Bhaviṣya, Brahma-vaivarta, Mārkaṇḍeya, and Brahmāṇḍa.

In all these *Purāṇas*, and especially in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the supreme religious principals have been personally described by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Catuṣśloki, the four principal verses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, are the essence of the *Vedas*. These eighteen *Purāṇas* are very extensive, and they are magnanimous by nature. By hearing these *Purāṇas*, the heart becomes purified and one develops a taste for hearing about his worshipable Lord.

The number of verses in each *Purāṇa* is herein given. Brahma—ten thousand, Viṣṇu—twenty-three thousand, Śiva—twenty-four thousand, Liṅga—eleven thousand, Padma—fifty-five thousand, Skanda—twenty-one thousand, Vāmana—ten thousand, Matsya—fourteen thousand, Varāha—twenty-four thousand, Agni—fifteen thousand, Kūrma—seventeen thousand, Garuḍa—nineteen thousand, Nārada—twenty-five thousand, Bhaviṣya—fourteen thousand five hundred, Brahma-vaivarta—eighteen thousand,

Mārkaṇḍeya—nine thousand five hundred, Brahmāṇḍa—twelve thousand, and Śrīmad-Bhāgavata *Purāṇa*—eighteen thousand. In total, the number of verses in all the *Purāṇas* is about four hundred thousand.

❀ Text 18 ❀

I bow down at the lotus feet of the eighteen sageś who have compiled the *smṛti* literatures. These *smṛtis*, or revealed scriptures, are Manu-smṛti, Atreya-smṛti, Vaiṣṇava-smṛti, Hārīta-smṛti, Yāmya-smṛti, Yājñavalkya-smṛti, Aṅgīrasa-smṛti, Śanaiścara-smṛti, Samvartaka-smṛti, Kātyāyana-smṛti, Śāṇḍilya-smṛti, Gautama-smṛti, Vaśiṣṭha-smṛti, Dākṣa-smṛti, Vārhaspatya-smṛti, Ātātapa-smṛti, Parāśara-smṛti, and Kṛatu-smṛti.

❀ Text 19 ❀

One who remembers these eight ministers of Lord Rāmacandra attains unflinching devotion to the lotus feet of the Lord. The Lord becomes pleased upon such a person, and that person becomes liberated from the cycle of repeated birth and death. These eight ministers are Dhṛṣṭi, Vijaya, Jayanta, Rāṣṭravardhana, Surāṣṭra, Aśoka, Dharma Pālaka, and Sumantra. They were all well-versed in the codes of morality. They were pure-hearted, well-behaved, very wise, blissful, and knowers of confidential truths.

Sumantra is said to be the best of all of them, and he is glorified throughout the four *yugas*.

cowherd inhabitants of Vraja freely roamed throughout the pasturing grounds, tending the cows.

❀ Text 20 ❀

May these associates and friends of Lord Rāmacandra shower their auspicious blessings upon us. They are Sūrya's son, the king of monkeys Sugrīva; Vāli's son, Aṅgada; Keśarī's son, Hanumān; Dadhimukha, Dvidida, Mayanda; the brave and powerful Jāmvavān, the king of bears; the great warrior Ulkāmukha, Suśeṇa, Darimukha, Kumuda, Nala, Nīla, Śarabha, Gavaya, Gavākṣa, Panasa, and the greatly powerful Gaṇḍhamādana. All of them were commanders of Lord Rāmacandra's army. They were valiant heroes, and they always protected the devotees from danger and acted for the pleasure of Lord Rāma.

❀ Text 21 ❀

Parjanya, the most honorable cowherd man of Vraja-maṇḍala, had nine cultured and pious sons. They were known as Navananda, or the nine Nandas. Their names were Dharānanda, Dhruvānanda, the wise Upananda, Abhinanda, the celebrated Nanda, the pure-hearted and intelligent Sunanda, the faithful Karmānanda, Dharmānanda, and their younger brother, Ballabha. These

❀ Text 22 ❀

I wish to adorn my head with the dust from the lotus feet of all the young and elderly men and women of Vraja-maṇḍala, whose mercy is sought after by the great sages and demigods, headed by Brahmā. These exalted inhabitants of Vraja are Nanda-gopa, Upananda, Dhruvānanda, Dharānanda; Nanda's wife, Yaśodā; Vṛṣabhānu's wife, Kīrtidā; Vṛṣabhānu, the king of Varsāṇa; Vṛṣabhānu's daughter, Śrī Rādhikā; the ever-blissful *gopīs*, Madhumaṅgala, Subala, Subāhu, Bhoja, Arjuna, and Śrīdāmā, as well as all the other cowherd boys who were friends of Śyāmsundara Kṛṣṇa. I wish to smear the dust of their feet upon my head.

❀ Text 23 ❀

These servants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of the King of Vraja, would always remain engaged in His service, both at home and in the forest. They were Raktaka, Patraka, and Patrī, and they were dear to everyone. Others were Madhukaṇṭha, Madhuvarta, Rasāla, Viśāla, Premakanda, Makaranda, Sadānanda, Candrahāsa, Payada, Vakula, Rasadāna, Sārada, and Buddhi Prakāśa. These well-

behaved and supremely intelligent friends of Kṛṣṇa would serve Him according to the will of the Lord, and the need of the time and circumstances. These sixteen servants were also Kṛṣṇa's friends. I always desire to have the dust from their feet.

❀ **Text 24** ❀

There are many exalted devotees spread all over the seven islands. In Jambudvīpa, Plakṣadvīpa, and Śālmalīdvīpa there are many great devotees. Who can understand the glories of the devotees of the sacred islands known as Kuśadvīpa and Krauncadvīpa? Śākadvīpa and Puṣkaradvīpa are vast and celebrated. The devotees who reside at Lokāloka Mountain, Sumeru Mountain, and other such places are my eternal masters. The servants of the Supreme Lord who live in these seven islands are the crown decorating my head.

❀ **Text 25** ❀

In the middle of Bhū-maṇḍala lies Jambudvīpa. This island is divided into nine parts. The inhabitants of those nine tracts of land are my lords and masters. We are their subjects. The predominating Lord of Ilāvarta-varṣa is Lord Śaṅkarṣaṇa, and His principal devotee is Mahādeva. The predominating Lord of Ramaṇaka-varṣa

is Lord Matsyadeva, and His worshipper is Manu. The worshipping Deity of Hiranya-varṣa is Lord Kūrmadeva, and His worshipper is Aryamā. The predominating Lord of Kuru-varṣa is Lord Varāhadeva, and mother earth worships Him. Lord Nṛsiṅhadeva is worshipped by His dear devotee Prahalāda in Hari-varṣa. The predominating Lord of Kimpuruṣa-varṣa is Lord Rāmacandra, and Hanumān is always engaged in His service. The worshipping Lord of Bhārata-varṣa is Lord Nara-nārāyaṇa, and Nārada Muni is His worshipper. Lord Hayagrīva is the predominating Deity of Bhadrāṣva-varṣa, and His worshipper is Bhadrāśravā. The predominating Lord of Ketumāla-varṣa is Lord Kāmadeva, and goddess Kamalā is His worshipper.

❀ **Text 26** ❀

Now hear attentively this discussion of the devotees who reside in Śvetadvīpa, thus always having the *darśana* of the lotus face of Lord Nārāyaṇa. If there is an impediment to their gazing upon the Supreme Lord for even for a moment, they consider it to be more painful than suffering in millions of hellish conditions.

Once, Nārada Muni went to see these devotees in Śvetadvīpa, desiring to instruct them in spiritual knowledge. However, Lord Nārāyaṇa gestured with His hand, indicating that Nārada should depart, because these devotees are so much attached to His

beautiful form that they have no need for such instructions. In other words, they have no interest in hearing about theoretical spiritual knowledge. In Śvetadvīpa, the devotees are completely fixed in loving devotional service and so they have no interest in cultivating transcendental knowledge.

❁ Commentary ❁

The devotees residing in Śvetadvīpa always meditate on the beautiful form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Their goal of life and the process to achieve it are one and the same. They simply aspire to have within their vision the nectrean beauty of the Lord. While instructing and delivering everyone by his divine instructions, Nārada Muni once arrived at Śvetadvīpa, desiring to impart instructions to the inhabitants. However, the Lord gestured to make Nārada understand that there was no need to impart instructions in this abode because the inhabitants always take pleasure in drinking His nectrean beauty. Their intelligence is firmly attached to the Lord's beautiful form.

Feeling a bit morose, Nārada Muni left Śvetadvīpa and went to Vaikuṇṭha, where he narrated the whole incident to the Lord. The Lord said, "Let us go there together and see with our own eyes how the devotees of Śvetadvīpa are completely absorbed in the devotional mellows."

As Lord Nārāyaṇa and Nārada approached Śvetadvīpa, they saw a bird sitting on the shore of a lake, absorbed in meditation.

Nārada inquired "My Lord! Why is this bird sitting here like this?" The Lord replied, "This bird is greatly fortunate, for it is merged in the ecstasy of devotional service."

"This devotee-bird has been meditating on the Lord for one thousand years, but its desire has still not been fully satisfied. Although it has remained near the water, it is still thirsty, for it cannot drink the water. This bird sustains its life simply by partaking of the Lord's remnants of food, and nothing else. It does not eat or drink anything other than *prasāda*. Now see this with your own eyes."

After saying this, the Lord drank some water and kept the remnants in front of the bird. Without hesitation, the devotee-bird drank a few drops of the water. Tasting the Lord's remnants, its eyes became filled with tears of joy as it became overwhelmed by devotional ecstasy. Seeing this wonderful incident, Nārada Muni was astonished. He then circumambulated the devotee-bird again and again and decided to stay at that place and serve him for some time.

But the Supreme Lord said to Nārada, "Now let us go further so that we will see many more devotees. In this way, we will get an idea of the glories of the devotees of Śvetadvīpa. You should carefully study the characteristics of the devotees here, and then come to your own conclusion with the help of your intelligence."

The Lord of Vaikuṇṭha and Nārada Muni went further on in Śvetadvīpa. They came to a temple where the holy names of the Lord

❀ **Text 27** ❀

and His pastimes were being glorified. Āratī was offered to the Lord in the temple, and after awhile, a devotee came running, soon realizing that the āratī was over and the temple was closed. He considered himself to be most unfortunate, being bereft of the Lord's *darśana* during the āratī ceremony. Indeed, his grief was so intense that he fell down unconscious. From behind came his wife, who asked, "Is āratī over?" Having received the same reply as her husband, and seeing her husband lying unconscious, she also fell to the ground motionless because of not being able to see the Lord's worship. Their children also came there and met with the same fate. Indeed, they all died due to separation from the Lord. Without seeing the nectrean beauty of the Lord, they thought that it would be better to die. They had no desire to continue living.

Nārada Muni was struck with wonder while seeing their intense desire for drinking with their eyes the Lord's beauty. He was very impressed by their genuine love for the Lord. Thus the Supreme Lord showed Nārada Muni the actual position of love of Godhead. After some time, when another āratī began in the temple, all the devotees that were lying dead regained their lives by the mercy of the Supreme Lord. The sages, headed by Vyāsadeva, have glorified the characteristics of these devotees and so one should meditate upon them.

These serpent-devotees of the Lord have eight dynasties of descendants. They are the doorkeepers of the Supreme Lord. They are always alert and busy in the service of the Lord, constantly residing in the His abode. The serpent Ilāpatra, and the thousand-hooded Ananta-śeṣa, forever expand the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The serpents, Padma and Śaṅku, have firmly resolved to always meditate on the Supreme Lord within their hearts. The serpents, Aśukambala and Vāsukī, are eternal order carriers of the Lord. The serpents, Karkoṭaka and Takṣaka, are great heroes, and they faithfully carry out the orders of the Supreme Lord. The description of their characters is found in the literature Śiva-saṁhītā. It is the opinion of my spiritual master, Agradeva, that these serpent-devotees are always very faithful and devoted to the Supreme Lord.

(It is to be noted herein that so far the author has described the characteristics of the devotees of Satya-yuga, Tretā-yuga, and Dvāpara-yuga. Now the author will begin to describe the characteristics of the four *sampradāya* ācāryas, and the devotees of Kali-yuga)

❀ **Text 28** ❀

Just as the Supreme Personality of Godhead

assumed twenty-four incarnations during Satya-yuga, Tretā-yuga, and Dvāpara-yuga, so four great ācāryas appeared in the age of Kali. The founder of the Śrī-sampradāya was the magnanimous Śrī Rāmānujācārya, who appeared in South India. He was an ocean of knowledge and mercy, and was like a desire-tree for delivering the fallen souls. The founder of the Rūdra-sampradāya was Śrī Viṣṇu Svāmī. He was like a ship to help those who are drowning in the ocean of material existence to cross beyond it. The founder of the Brahmā-sampradāya was Śrī Madhvācārya. He was like a cloud showering devotional service in order to overflow the dry, hard hearts of the conditioned souls. The founder of the Kumāra-sampradāya was Śrī Nimbāditya. He was like a sun destroying the fog of ignorance by manifesting the illumination of knowledge and devotional service. These four great ācāryas appeared in this world, and by practical demonstration have firmly established Vaiṣṇava-dharma with their four *sampradāyas*.

❀ **Text 29** ❀

Śrī Rāmānuja was the founder-ācārya of the Śrī-sampradāya, Śrī Viṣṇu Svāmī was the founder-ācārya of Śrī Rūdra-sampradāya, Śrī Nimbāditya was the founder-ācārya of Śrī Kumāra-sampradāya, and Śrī Madhvācārya was the founder-ācārya of the Brahmā-sampradāya.

❀ **Commentary** ❀

There is a beautiful story of how Śrī Nimbārka received his name. One day, a *sannyāsī* came to his village. Śrī Nimbārka invited the *sannyāsī* to his house for lunch. As Śrī Nimbārka was cooking lunch for the *sannyāsī*, it became so late that the sun was about to set. The *sannyāsī* pointed out from the scriptures that after the sun has set, a *sannyāsī* should not eat. Upon hearing this, Śrī Nimbārka gestured towards the sky above a neem tree, showing the *sannyāsī* that the sun was shining in the sky. The *sannyāsī* was surprised, but he finally agreed to take his meal. When the *sannyāsī* completed his meal, the stars began to appear in the sky. Soon, the darkness of night covered all directions. From this incident everyone could understand that it was Śrī Nimbārka who had manifested the sun above the neem tree by an exhibition of his great potency. Since then he became known as Nimbāditya, or Nimbārkācārya. This commentator has become completely captivated by his divine qualities, and thus he has sung of his glories.

Text 30

Goddess Lakṣmī, the daughter of the Milk Ocean, created a shelter of devotional service known as Śrī-sampradāya by which all the conditioned souls who are afflicted by the threefold material miseries can gain relief. The Supreme Lord's associate, Viśvakṣeṇa, became a follower of Lakṣmī. Later on, the

great sage Śrī Śaṭhakopa enabled the Śrī-sampradāya to flourish. After him, there appeared Śrī Bopadeva, who manifested the cream of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Later on, the auspicious Śrīnātha Muni appeared, followed by the celebrated Śrī Puṇḍarikākṣa and Śrī Rāmamiśra. Then appeared Parāṅkuśācārya, whose glories are well-known in the world. After him there appeared Śrī Yāmunācārya, and then the sun-like Śrī Rāmānujācārya, who destroyed the darkness which is born of ignorance.

❀ Text 31 ❀

Śrī Rāmānujācārya is said to be an incarnation of the thousand-hooded Ananta-śeṣa. He successfully preached the path of devotional service to deliver all the people of the world. His spiritual master gave him a *mantra* and instructed him to keep it secret, but Śrī Rāmānujācārya climbed upon the highest peak of the temple and with a loud voice chanted the *mantra* so that everyone could hear it. When everyone heard the *mantra* chanted loudly, they woke up from their sleep. Seventy-two people accepted the *mantra* and thus seventy-two ways of worship have come into existence. Among his disciples, Kurutāraka was the leader, and he also preached the devotional cult to deliver the fallen souls. There is no one equal to Śrī Rāmānājucārya, for he was an ocean of mercy and a shelter for the surrendered souls.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Rāmānājucārya was an incarnation of Śeṣa, who has one thousand hoods. He was always eager to impart beneficial instructions to the people in general. His spiritual master, Śrī Goṣṭhīpūrṇācārya, imparted to him a *mantra* and ordered him to keep it within his heart. By chanting that *mantra*, Śrī Rāmānujācārya was able to see the Supreme Lord face to face. The merciful Śrī Rāmānājucārya thought that since he was able to see the Supreme Lord by chanting the *mantra*, then if all the people of the town chanted the *mantra*, they would also be able to see the Supreme Lord face to face.

Thinking like this, Śrī Rāmānujācārya climbed onto the temple dome in the dead of night and chanted the *mantra* very loudly. The sound of the *mantra* spread throughout the four directions so that seventy-two people came to accept it and learn it by heart. All these seventy-two people were great devotees and became the principal disciples of Śrī Rāmānujācārya.

When his spiritual master heard about what had happened, he chastised Śrī Rāmānuja, saying, “You have violated my order and so you will have to suffer in hell.” Śrī Rāmānuja folded his hand and mildly replied, “My lord, if many people become happy by directly seeing the Lord then I am ready to go to hell and suffer thousands of miseries.” Seeing his disciple’s magnanimous nature, the spiritual master became greatly pleased and blessed him profusely. I have thus sung about the wonderful devotional mood of a devotee.

Once, Śrī Rāmānujācārya went to Nilācala in order to have the *darśana* of Lord Jagannātha. There he saw that the local *pāṇḍās* were below the standards of proper conduct and so he removed all of them from their respective services. Śrī Rāmānuja engaged one thousand of his disciples in the service of Lord Jagannātha, and they observed the prescribed rules and regulations that are found in the scriptures. Still, the Supreme Lord keeps His confidential moods hidden within His heart.

When the Lord saw that His former servants were now bereft of His service, and were thus despondant, He revealed His internal mood by saying to Śrī Rāmānujācārya, “I have accepted these worshipers as My servants and so it is not proper for Me to reject them. Therefore I can not abandon them. I accept the loving sentiments of My devotees while ignoring their insignificant faults. Therefore you must reinstate My old servants, the *pāṇḍās*.”

Still, Śrī Rāmānujācārya did not agree with the Lord and so the Lord again repeated His will and determination. Again Śrī Rāmānujācārya refused by saying, “I am worshipping You according to the prescribed Vedic rules and regulations. How can I give them up?”

Even the Supreme Lord’s prowess becomes dimmed in front of His devotee. Lord Jagannātha repeatedly ordered Śrī Rāmānuja to replace to new worshipers with the old ones, but he did not heed His words. Finally, the Lord displayed a magical

feat. The Lord ordered His carrier, Garuḍa, to transport Śrī Rāmānujācārya and his disciples back to their own country when they were fast asleep in the dead of night. Garuḍa followed the order of Lord Jagannātha and carried all of them back to their own country. When Śrī Rāmānuja and his disciples woke up in the morning, they saw that they were not in Jagannātha Purī, but rather far away at Śrīraṅgam-dhāma. Rāmānujācārya could thus understand the confidential mood of the Supreme Lord, and His affection for His dear devotees.

Thereafter, the original devotees resumed serving Lord Jagannātha with love and devotion. By this incident, the Supreme Personality of Godhead revealed that He is not pleased with one who simply follows the Vedic rules and regulations very nicely but without any true devotion. Rather, He is pleased by a devotee’s spontaneous love and devotion.

❁ **Text 32** ❁

These four great saintly personalities were like four pillars in the four directions. By their influence, they kept the platform of devotional service fixed and unshakable. In their presence, no opposing elements, or unauthorized persons, could victoriously argue against the supremacy of devotional service, nor did they dare to even try and refute the devotional conclusions. These exalted devotees were Śrī Śrutiprajña, Śrī

Śrutideva, Śrī Puṣkara, and Śrī Rṣabha. Other exalted devotees were Śrī Śrutidhāma, Śrī Śrutiudhi, Śrī Parājīta, and Śrī Vāmana. These saintly persons were godbrothers of Śrī Rāmānujācārya. By their devotional attitude and learning, they became famous all over the world. They distributed their mercy to all the people of the world. They were as good as the four Kumāras, headed by Sanaka, as far as their knowledge of the Śiva-saṁhītā is concerned. They were fixed up and liberal devotees in the Śrī-sampradāya. The society of devotees would address them as masters in their line.

❀ Commentary ❀

❀ Śrī Śrutiprajña ❀

Śrī Śrutiprajña was born in a *brāhmaṇa* family and was accustomed to always chant the holy name of the Lord. He treated all the devotees with equal vision and respected everyone. He considered devotional service to the Lord as the best form of spiritual practice and indeed, the ultimate goal of life.

Once, as Śrī Śrutiprajña was going to Nilācala to have the *darśana* of Lord Jagannātha, he met a dog-eater. It turned out that this lowborn person was returning home after having the *darśana* of Lord Jagannātha. Seeing Śrī Śrutiprajña, the dog-eater offered his obsequences, and Śrutiprajña happily embraced him. He also accepted some of Lord Jagannātha's *prasāda* from

the hands of the dog-eater to show that Jagannātha *prasāda* should be honored in all respects. However, the dog-eater felt very embarrassed. Śrī Śrutiprajña told him, "Dear brother! You are superior to me because you are returning home after having the *darśana* of the Supreme Lord, whereas I am just on my way to have His *darśana*." Śrī Śrutiprajña spent that entire night with the devotee, discussing topics about the Lord.

❀ Śrī Śrutideva ❀

In order to spread the cult of devotional service and bring back to the lotus feet of the Lord those who are adverse to His service, Śrī Śrutideva traveled all over the country with a group of devotees. Once, when Śrī Śrutideva went to the kingdom of a godless king, the subjects did not allow him to take water from a well, thinking him to be a low-class person. All the devotees, headed by Śrutideva, left that place while chanting the holy names of the Lord. Meanwhile, all the wells in the entire kingdom dried up, and so the citizens informed the king of the dire situation.

The king, along with his ministers, approached Śrī Śrutideva and begged his pardon. The devotees forgave the king and returned to his kingdom. As soon as they entered the city, all the wells and ponds became filled with clear water. As a result of this amazing incident, both the king and his subjects became disciples of Śrī

Śrutideva. They had the good association of the devotees and came to relish the mellows of devotional service.

Śrī Śrutidhāma

Śrī Śrutidhāma always treated the devotees as worshipable personalities. Besides his devotional practice, he was such a learned scholar that he would unfailingly remove the doubts and illusions of the devotees by explaining the confidential meanings of the *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, and historical works. Once, as he was giving a discourse about *karma*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti* to the devotees at Prayāga, one of them inquired with folded hands, “O Mahārāja, it is said that in Prayāga-tīrtha the Gaṅgā, Yamunā, and Sarasvatī converge, but here we can only see the two currents of white and black water—that of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā. So where is the third river, the Sarasvatī? Kindly show us the currents of the River Sarasvatī.”

After hearing this, Śrī Śrutidhāma began to meditate. In his meditation he saw the three currents of the three rivers. Then, by his own prowess, he showed these three rivers to all the assembled devotees. All the devotees saw a narrow reddish current in the middle of the black and white currents of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā. The devotees were exceedingly pleased and treated Śrī Śrutidhāma as an exalted soul.

❁ Śrī Śrutiudadhi ❁

Śrī Śrutiudadhi used to wander here and there while remembering the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. Once, as he was sitting in the garden of a king, thus staying aloof from the external world while meditating on the Lord, a thief passed by on the road after having stolen from the royal treasury. The royal guards were chasing him and so out of fear, he dropped his booty next to Śrī Śrutiudadhi's and continued running. When the guards came there and saw the devotee with the stolen goods, they considered him to be the thief and so arrested him and took him to the king.

Although the king put him behind bars, it did not affect Śrī Śrutiudadhi's worship of the Supreme Lord. Within the prison, Śrī Śrutiudadhi continued his *bhajana* and meditation upon the Lord. However, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is very affectionate to His devotees, could not tolerate this and so the king began to experience a severe headache. When his pain did not subside even after trying so many cures, the king's ministers advised him to immediately release Śrī Śrutiudadhi. According to them, the king's headache was due to the offence he had committed at the feet of a Vaiṣṇava. The king released the saintly person and begged for his forgiveness while falling at his feet. Later on, he also became a disciple of Śrī Śrutiudadhi. In this way, these four stalwarts were great preachers of devotional service who

benefitted the people of the entire world.

❀ Text 33 ❀

As soon as one hears about Śrī Rāmānujācārya's son-in-law, Śrī Lālācārya, he begins to cultivate a special attraction for the Supreme Lord. Once, a dead body with *tulasī* neck beads came floating down the river. Śrī Lālācārya saw the dead body, pulled it to out of the water, and performed the funeral rites as if that deceased person were his own brother. Thereafter, on the thirteenth day, he invited the *brāhmaṇas* and his relatives for a meal. Understanding that the dead body was that of an unknown person, the *brāhmaṇas* raised their eyebrows and did not come to accept the meal. On the other hand, the Lord's associates from Vaiṣṇava arrived there and had their meal. All the people saw them taking *prasāda*, and then they departed, vanishing into the sky. Nobody saw them thereafter. From this wonderful incident the glories of Lālācārya spread throughout the world.

❀ Commentary ❀

Now hear attentively about Śrī Rāmānuja's son-in-law and disciple, Śrī Lālācārya. Once, his spiritual master instructed him: "You should love the devotees millions of times more than you love the Lord." However, Lālācārya replied, "My dear sir,

this is impossible." The spiritual master said, "You should treat all devotees as if they are as good as your spiritual master." But again Lālācārya replied, "This is also very difficult." Then his spiritual master instructed: "Then love them as your brother and not less than that." Lālācārya accepted this instruction, and from that day he began serving the devotees like they were his own brother.

Once, a dead body adorned with *tulasī* neck beads came floating in the waves of the River Kāverī. Lālācārya's wife first saw the dead body while fetching water, and she told her husband about it. Lālācārya took the dead body out of the water and brought it home, accompanied by musical instruments, and then took it to the crematorium ground and properly performed the funeral ceremony. He felt sad due to separation from his brother. Later on, he considered that his brother was a devotee of the Lord who had left his body and gone back to Godhead. In this way he preached to his mind and became pacified.

On the thirteenth day, Lālācārya arranged for a grand festival in honor of the departed devotee. He invited his relatives and the *brāhmaṇas*. Everyone accepted the invitation, but they did not show up in time for the meal. All the *brāhmaṇas* gathered in one place and became very disturbed and confused about the situation. They spoke to one another: "A dead body came floating down the river. No one knows his caste or parentage. Therefore we cannot have

our meal in that ceremony.” Indeed, they accused Lālācārya of creating a disturbance in the *brāhmaṇa* community. Lālācārya waited a long time, and when he learned that the *brāhmaṇas* would not come, he was very aggrieved. He thought it wise to approach his spiritual master and receive instructions from him.

Śrī Lālācārya went to his master, Śrī Rāmānuja, and offered him respectful obeisances. Then with folded hands he narrated the whole story. Śrī Rāmānucācārya told him, “Go back without any fear or hesitation. These unfortunate and poor *brāhmaṇas* do not know the glories of *prasāda*. Those who actually know the glories of *prasāda* will come quickly to your place, for your satisfaction.” Saying this, Śrī Rāmānuja looked at the sky and then to the ground, as if to invite the Lord’s associates from Vaikuṇṭha. He assured Lālācārya, saying, “Return home and very soon the residents of Vaikuṇṭha will come to your place to honor *prasāda*.”

After awhile, a group of the Lord’s associates, assuming the form of *brahmanas*, arrived at Lālācārya’s house. When the local *brāhmaṇas* saw them, they talked among themselves: “Let these persons eat. Do not stop them now, but when they return after eating, we will inquire from them and ridicule them.”

When Lālācārya saw the Lord’s associates, he felt flat onto the ground to offer his obeisances. He then prayed, “O lords! You have shown your kindness upon me by

considering me as your servant. Now please sit down and honor *prasādam*.”

The associates of the Lord sat down and began relishing the Lord’s remnants. From time to time they praised the glories of the *prasāda*. Everyone assembled there felt delighted. Lālācārya also became joyful, appreciating the influence of the devotees’ association.

After taking their meal, the associates of the Lord departed. From the courtyard they flew into the air on their way to Vaikuṇṭha. Meanwhile, the local *brāhmaṇas* who were waiting saw the *brāhmaṇa* invitees leave through the sky and so, realizing that they were divine personalities, they felt sorry. Indeed, their brahmanical prestige was mashed. They then went to Lālācārya’s house and felt great satisfaction in his company, although they could not look at him in the eyes due to feelings of shame. Having now understood the glories of Lord’s *prasāda*, they carefully picked up the particles of *prasāda* that were scattered on the ground and honored them.

Having realized the glories of Śrī Lālācārya, the local *brāhmaṇas* fell down at his feet and begged for forgiveness. They rolled on the ground in the courtyard and humbly glorified Lālācārya in various ways. Thereafter, the king of devotees, Śrī Lālācārya, told them, “It is because of your mercy that I was blessed with the association of the Lord’s associates from Vaikuṇṭha. Today I had the *darśana* of the four-armed associates of the Lord that are described in the *Purāṇas*.”

The *brāhmaṇas* said, “Please do not take offence, but kindly accept us as your servants. This is our internal desire and so please fulfill it.” Śrī Lālācārya forgave the *brāhmaṇas* and awarded them spiritual initiation. By his mercy, they all became exalted devotees, fully purified on the inside and outside, and worthy of praise. In this way the fame of Śrī Lālācārya spread like a forest fire all over the country.

❀ **Text 34** ❀

Now hear about the sacred history of devotion to mother Gaṅgā narrated by one of the spiritual masters in the disciplic succession of the Śrī-sampradāya. Once, one of the spiritual masters instructed his disciples that, in his absence, they should treat the Gaṅgā as good as they treated him. When the spiritual master left for another place, his disciples began to worship the Gaṅgā just like they would have worshiped their spiritual master. There were many disciples of this spiritual master. Someone would devotedly bathe in the Gaṅgā, someone would drink Gaṅgā water, and one particular disciple, named Pādapadma, would worship and offer obeisances to mother Gaṅgā with his very heart and soul. People would criticize him, not knowing his internal mood.

When the spiritual master returned from his preaching tour, in order to reveal Pādapadma’s faith and devotion for Gaṅgā-

devī, he entered the Gaṅgā to take a bath and asked Pādapadma to bring him fresh cloth. However, Pādapadma became afraid of touching the water of the Gaṅgā with his feet, and he was also afraid of disobeying his spiritual master. Realizing this, mother Gaṅgā spread lotus leaves, beginning from the shore of the river up to the spot where the spiritual master was taking a bath. Pādapadma used that pathway and quickly went to his spiritual master with the cloth. In this way his glories were revealed. By witnessing this wonderful incident, everyone developed great faith and devotion for mother Gaṅgā, and for the devotee, Pādapadma. From that day onwards, he was addressed as Pādapadmācārya.

❀ **Text 35** ❀

The kind of worship practiced in the Śrī-sampradāya, and their philosophy known as *viśiṣṭādvaitva*, are meant for delivering the fallen conditioned souls from material existence. In that *sampradāya* appeared an exalted Vaiṣṇava named Śrī Hariyānanda, who was as glorious as Bṛhaspati, the spiritual master of the demigods. Another devotee, named Śrī Rāghavānanda, also brought glory to the Śrī-sampradāya by his devotion. He conquered the whole of India while bearing his victory flag. He made his permanent residence at Kāśī. He was able to engage the members of the four *varṇas* and four *āśramas* in the devotional service

of the Lord. His disciple was the famous Śrī Rāmānandācārya, who lived in this world simply for the welfare of others.

**The guru-paramparā
of the Śrī-sampradāya:**

Lord Rāmacandra, mother Sitā,
Hanumān, Brahmā, Vasiṣṭha, Parāśara,
Vedavyāsa, Śukadeva, Bodhāyana
(Puruṣottamācāya), Gaṅgādhārācārya,
Sadānandācārya, Rāmeśvarānandācārya,
Dvāranandācārya, Devānandācārya,
Śyāmānandācārya, Śrutānandācārya,
Cidānandācārya, Puṇḍānandācārya,
Śrīyānandācārya, Hariyānandācārya,
Rāghavānandācārya, Rāmānandācārya.

❀ **Text 36** ❀

Just as Raghunātha, Lord Rāmacandra, constructed a bridge so that His monkey soldiers could cross the sea, so Śrī Rāmānandācārya built a bridge with his disciples and grand-disciples to deliver the conditioned souls from the ocean of material existence. The names of his twelve leading disciples were Anantānanda, Kabira dāsa, Sukhānanda, Surasurānanda, Padmāvatī, Narahariyānanda, Pipā, Bhāvānanda, Raidāsa, Dhanā, Sena, and Surasurānanda's wife. Apart from these, there were many other exalted disciples and grand-disciples of Śrī Rāmānandācārya. They were all very

famous and powerful, and they brought auspiciousness to the world. They were the benefactors of the devotees, and they were storehouses of devotional service. Śrī Rāmānandācārya lived a long life in this world to deliver many fallen souls.

❀ **Text 37** ❀

The exalted devotee, Śrī Anantānandācārya, had many disciples who were equally devoted to the Supreme Lord due to having received the mercy of the lotus feet of their spiritual master. Among them, Yogānanda, Gayeśa, Karmaçandra, Alha, Payahārī, Sārī Rāmadāsa, and Raṅga were supremely powerful and endowed with divine qualities. Another prominent disciple of Anantānandācārya was Śrī Narahari, who was ever-joyful. He was like a cloud that continually showered the nectar of devotional service.

Śrī Anantānanda and his disciples filled the treasury of pure fame by singing the glories of Lord Rāmacandra and Lord Kṛṣṇacandra. Śrī Anantānanda exhibited the very limit of the mellows derived from the ocean of devotional service to the Supreme Lord. He wrote a book named *Hari-bhakti-sinḍhubelā*, which is unavailable at present. Mother Jānakī personally blessed him by placing Her lotus hand on his head. As a result of this, he became the foremost devotee of his time.

❀ **Commentary** ❀

There is a village named Dauṣā in the province of Jaipur, where lived a devotee named Śrī Raṅga, who belonged to the *vaiśya* community. In his house there was a servant who, after his death, went to the house of Yamarāja. Yamarāja made him the leader of his messengers.

One day, by the order of Yamarāja, he went to Dauṣā village, to the house of Raṅga, and said, “O businessman! Listen! I was your servant in the past and now I have become a Yamadūta. I have come to take away a vagabond from this village. Now just see my magic. I will sit on the horn of the vagabond’s bull and take him away after killing him. Then you will understand that without devotion to the Supreme Lord, this is the destination of all the living entities of the world.”

The Yamadūta disappeared and then before the eyes of Śrī Raṅga, he killed the vagabond and took him away. People began to say that he was killed by the horn of the bull, but the real fact was something else. After seeing this incident, Śrī Raṅga immediately surrendered to the Supreme Lord and became a great devotee. He took shelter of Śrī Anantānanda and became his disciple.

Śrī Raṅga’s son used to see a ghost at night, and due to that fear, he became very thin and weak, day by day. When Śrī Raṅga inquired from his son and thus realized the cause of his weakness, he became anxious. That night, Śrī Raṅga personally slept by the

side of his son. In the dead of night, the ghost appeared and was angrily chased away by Śrī Raṅga. Still, the ghost humbly requested Raṅga, “Kindly deliver me from this ghostly condition and award me a better destination. I was a goldsmith by caste. Because of bad association and the performance of sinful activities, I became a ghost. I have looked all over the world, searching for the means of my deliverance, and now, finally, I take shelter of you.”

Hearing the pathetic words of the ghost, Śrī Raṅga felt compassion and so by his mercy he transformed him into a divine personality. Such was the wonderful glory of the great devotee, Śrī Raṅga.

❀ **Text 38** ❀

In the quarrelsome age of Kali, Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa, who sustained his life only by drinking milk, was the limit of renunciation. He never ate any grains. Although he placed his hand on people’s heads, he never extended his hand to beg for anything. He delivered many people from the illusion and lamentation of material existence. His disciples and followers became fearless and ultimately attained liberation. He was a reservoir of devotional prowess, and he had great enthusiasm for performing *bhajana*. He was a strict celibate and an accomplished *yogī*. All the kings of India came to render service at his lotus feet. He appeared in the dynasty of the sage, Dadhici, and by his devotional

prowess he bought pleasure to the hearts of the devotees.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa only drank milk, and he never ate any food grains. He never asked for any favor from anyone. He always blessed whoever he met with devotional service. The king of Kulhu was the prime example of this. Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa met the king in a mountain cave, and by his mercy that ruler of men was able to regain his kingdom. The king was so impressed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa that he began rendering service to the devotees more and more as time passed.

Once, a *pujārī* was bringing a plate *jalebīs* to offer to the Lord in the temple. However, one *jalebī* fell to the ground, and the young son of the king picked it up and ate it. Seeing this, the king felt very sad that without it being offered to the Lord, the boy had eaten the *jalebī*. Indeed, out of anger, the king unsheathed his sword and tried to kill his son, but the devotees who were nearby stopped him, thus saving the boy. These devotees said, “Now this boy is ours, and if you want to take him, you have to pay the price.”

According to Śrī Priyādāsa, the young prince of the king of Kulhu was alive when he was writing this commentary. He was a great devotee of the Supreme Lord. He would regularly render service to saintly persons, and he always showed them great respect. One day, he arranged a feast in

which a devotee woman was sitting and taking *prasāda*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa brought an extra plate of *prasāda* and gave it to the lady, saying, “This plate of *prasāda* is for the unborn child in your womb. The child is a great devotee of the Lord and therefore fit to receive my respect.”

Once, a person who dressed himself as a Vaiṣṇava was engaged in making and selling shoes. Seeing this, the prince addressed him: “Dear sir! You are treating other people as devotees and serving their shoes, but no one knows your internal mood and devotion. You are doing this service so that people do not hurt their feet by stepping on stones, thorns, etc. Now give up this service. Seeing your devotee dress and this type of work, people will misunderstand you.”

Saying this, the prince gave that person sufficient land for agriculture and his performance of Vaiṣṇava *sevā*. He also gave him some wealth and good instructions. In due course of time, that person became a great devotee of the Lord.

❀ Text 39 ❀

By the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa, all of his disciples became expert in delivering the conditioned souls from the ocean of material existence. The names of his disciples were Śrī Kīlhadēva, Svāmī Śrī Agradēva, Kevaladāsa, Caraṇadāsa, Haṭhīnārāyaṇa, Sūrajā dāsa, Puruṣottama dāsa, Pṛthu dāsa, and Tripura dāsa. All of them were engaged

in the devotional service of Lord Hari. Apart from these, there were Padmanātha, Gopāla dāsa, Tekarāma, Tīlā, Gadādhara dāsa, Devāpaṇḍā, Hemadāsa, Kalyāṇa dāsa; Gaṅgābāi, who was as good as Gaṅgā-devī; Viṣṇu dāsa, Kanharadāsa, Raṅgārāma, Candana, and Sabīri. All of them were great devotees of Lord Govinda.

❀ Text 40 ❀

Just as Gaṅgā's son, grandfather Bhīṣma, was not troubled by death, so Svāmī Kilhadeva was not under the control of death like ordinary beings. Actually, he left his body by his own free will. This was possible because his mind was always fixed at the lotus feet of Lord Rāmacandra throughout the entire day and night. He was a great hero who conquered the six transformations of the material nature. He was always seen blissfully worshiping the Lord. All living beings offered him respect, and he also regarded everyone with respect because of seeing the presence of his Lord within all living entities. He was well-versed in Sāṅkhya philosophy and literature dealing with yoga. He left his body by releasing his life air through the top of his skull. He attained the position of one of the associates of the Lord. In this way, Śrī Kilhadeva, the son of Śrī Sumerudeva, spread his fame all over the world.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Kilhadeva's father, Śrī Sumerudeva, lived somewhere in the state of Gujarat, and he left his body at that place. As he was returning to the Lord's abode after boarding a celestial chariot, his son, Kilhadeva, was in Mathurā, sitting with King Mānsingh. By his divine vision, he saw his father in the sky in a celestial chariot and so he quickly stood up in a mood of reverence. He greeted his father, saying, "Very good! Very Good." His father blessed him and expressed his gratitude, saying, "It is by the strength of your piety that I am able to go to the abode of the Supreme Lord."

King Mānsingh was surprised and asked Kilhadeva, "With whom are you speaking?" Kilhadeva replied, "What can I say? This is not to be revealed." But when the king requested him again and again, Kilhadeva narrated the whole story. Hearing this, the king was quite astonished and could not believe it and so he sent a messenger to find out if the story was correct or not. When the king finally received the news from his messenger, he felt like an offender and so he offered his obeisances to Śrī Kilhadeva and accepted instructions from him. In this way, he developed great faith in the devotees and understood that it was his good fortune to have the association of such a saintly person.

Śrī Kilhadeva's mind was so much absorbed in thought of the lotus feet of Lord Rāmacandra that he had no time for anything else. Because of such absorption in thought of the Lord, he was able to conquer

death. Once, he thought, "Let me serve Śrī Sītā-Rāma." Flowers and garlands for the worship of the Lord were kept in a box. As he attempted to open the box and take out a flower garland, a poisonous snake bit his hand. Out of compassion, and knowing the snake to be hungry, Kilhadeva once again extended his hand so that the snake could bite him again. In this way he had the snake bite him three times. The fourth time, the snake did not bite him, but rather came out from the box. Kilhadeva was happy that he could satisfy the guest-snake. The amazing thing was that there was no effect of the poison on his body. This was because he was always engaged in drinking the nectar of the Lord's transcendental beauty.

When Śrī Kilhadeva's time was ripe for going back to Godhead, he assembled all the devotees so that they could chant the holy names of the Lord. In this way, he gave up his body. All the devotees and *yogīs* were astonished when they heard of this wonderful incident. Anyone who hears about Śrī Kilhadeva's character becomes devoted to the Supreme Lord.

One day, after taking his bath in the Yamunā at Mathurā, Śrī Kilhadeva sat down and began meditating on the Lord. At that time, the king of Delhi arrived there. The guards wanted to remove Śrī Kilhadeva's from the area, but he was fully absorbed in meditation and therefore had no external perception. The king ordered the guards to drive nails into Śrī Kilhadeva's head, but as soon as the guards started to do this, the

nails melted and became like water. Seeing this magical feat, the king was certainly astonished and so he fell at Śrī Kilhadeva's feet and begged for forgiveness. Even today one can see that place in Mathurā, which is known as Kilhagali.

When the Muslims were forcibly converting the Hindus, Kilhadeva went to meet the king in Delhi. The king respectfully welcomed him and requested him to have his meal. However, Śrī Kilhadeva said that he would only eat *khicaḍī*. Then, when the *brāhmaṇa* cooks began mixing the rice and *dāl* together to make *khicaḍī*, they could not accomplish this simple task. The rice and *dāl* remained separate. The cooks informed the king of this remarkable situation. Realising that it must be a wonder created by the saintly person who was his guest, the king inquired about this from Kilhadeva.

Śrī Kilhadeva replied, "When *dāl* and rice cannot be mixed, then how can you expect to mix Hindus and Muslims? You should know that their qualities, natures, activities, and religion are different." After this, the king stopped the practice of forcible conversion. In this way, Śrī Kilhadeva protected the Hindu religion. It is by the mercy of Śrī Kilhadeva that the author of this book, Śrī Bhaktamāla, received divine vision.



Text 41



Śrī Agradāsa Svāmī did not uselessly spend even a moment without engaging in the

devotional service of the Lord. His practice of Vaiṣṇava etiquette matched that of the ancient *acāryas*. He was always engaged in serving the Lord in his mind, serving the Lord's Diet forms, and chanting the Lord's holy names. His practice would begin by fixing his mind at the lotus feet of Lord Rāmacandra. He had great affection for the celebrated garden known as Sītārāmabihāra. He would regularly water the plants in the garden and keep it clean. He would chant the holy names of Sītā-Rāma in such a way that it appeared as if a light shower was falling in the form of the sweet sounds. His spiritual master, Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa, who only drank milk, mercifully awarded him unflinching devotion to the Supreme Lord, which he manifested with his mind, speech, and actions.

❀ Commentary ❀

Once, Mānsingh, the King of Jaipur, went to have the *darśana* of Śrī Agradeva Svāmī. At that time Agradeva was in a garden. Some of the king's guards sat down at the entrance of the garden while other guards accompanied the king inside. At that time, Śrī Agradeva had gathered some dry leaves in the garden and had gone to throw them outside. When he saw the commotion caused by the king and his men entering the garden, Agradeva did not return, but sat down outside the garden. He began to meditate on the sweet form of the Lord, and soon he became fully absorbed in that thought. When he did not return, Śrī Nābhā approached Agradeva

Svāmī and seeing his loving absorption, he offered obeisances. Śrī Nābhā's eyes became filled with tears of joy.

Meanwhile, the king waited inside the garden for a long time, but finally, being unable to wait any longer, he approached Agradeva Svāmī and had his *darśana*. At that time, the king realized how Lord Rāmacandra bestows His full mercy upon his servants, and how Agradeva Svāmī was one such fortunate servant of the Lord.

❀ Additional comments ❀

Śrī Agradāsa Svāmī was an incarnation of Śrī Sītā's dear companion, Candrakalā. In the society of devotees he was known as Śrī Agralīka. He was a great *acārya* of the worship of Lord Rāmacandra. He was born on the second day of the waxing moon in the month of Phālguna in 1553 Śakābda era in a pure *brāhmaṇa* family in Rajasthan. In his childhood, he left home and went to the *āśrama* of Gālava Ṛṣi at Galtā near Jaipura and took shelter of Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa. The day he received *mantra* initiation, the king of Ājmera, named Śrī Pṛthvirāja, on the order of Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa, arranged for great Vaiṣṇava *sevā*. Many saintly persons participated in this festival and were blessed with devotion for the Lord.

After the disappearance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa, Śrī Kilhadeva assumed the Galtā seat, but because he was mostly engaged in meditation, Śrī Agradāsa took the responsibility of serving the devotees. The

author of *Bhaktamāla*, Śrī Nābhā, was a disciple of Śrī Agradāsa. By his order Śrī Nābhā wrote *Bhaktamāla*.

One day, Śrī Agradāsa, along with some devotees, went to a village. In that village lived a rich *vaiśya* devotee who served all the devotees for one month. One day, by the will of providence, that *vaiśya*'s son died. The people of the village accused the *vaiśya*, saying that it was because of his service to the devotees that his son had died due to negligence. After hearing about this, Śrī Agradeva Svāmī revived the dead child by utilizing the dust from the feet of the devotees. Seeing this miracle, all of the people lowered their heads in shame. Śrī Agradeva then instructed everyone, saying that they should always be prepared to serve saintly persons.

One day, Śrī Agradāsa wore the loin cloth of his senior godbrother, Śrī Kilhadeva, by mistake. Because of this, he felt so miserable that he left Jaipur and went to a village called Raivāsā in Rajasthan, about thirty miles away. The local villagers were very unhappy because there was a severe draught. When the cowherd men and farmers requested him to remain there, Śrī Agradāsa agreed. He then thrust an implement into the ground, and this brought forth fresh water. That reservoir of water can still be seen even today in the form of a well in that village. Śrī Agradāsa constructed a temple dedicated to Lord Rāmacandra in 1575 Śakābda era. He propagated the worship of Lord Rāmacandra everywhere, and he wrote many devotional literatures.

❀ **Text 42** ❀

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya incarnated to protect the Vedic religious system in Kali-yuga, when irreligion is very prominent. He was a great hero in defeating his opponents in scriptural debate. He defeated those who violated the codes of Vedic civilization, who were godless, and who followed the path of dry argument against the scriptures, such as the atheistic Buddhists and Jains. He defeated all such persons who were averse to Vedic culture and brought them to the path of *sanātana-dharma*. He was a perfect follower of the prescribed codes of conduct. His fame spread all over the world. He was a plenary incarnation of Lord Śiva, and had a special mission to accomplish, by the will of the Lord.

❀ **Commentary** ❀

By his great influence, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya converted atheistic and godless people to become devotees of Lord Hari. He refuted the theory of atheism and spread the narrations of the beautiful pastimes of the Supreme Lord throughout the land. During his time, the influence of Buddhism, Jainism, and other such atheistic sects were rampant throughout the world. He saved the innocent people from further degradation.

One day, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya had a debate about the scriptural conclusions with a learned scholar named Maṇḍana Miśra. Miśra's wife, Bhārati, was a learned

woman, and she became the mediator. In the scriptural debate, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya defeated Miśra. At this, Bhāratī said, “You cannot be called victorious unless you also defeat me, for I am Miśra’s better half.” After hearing this, Śaṅkarācārya began debating with Bhāratī. Then Bhāratī asked a very peculiar question. Śaṅkarācārya was a *sannyāsī* since his childhood and therefore had no understanding of how to answer her question and so he asked for six months time, and with his principal disciples went to Uttarā-khaṇḍa.

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya said to the people there: “I will give up my body and so please preserve it in a vat of oil. I will enter the body of a king named Amaruka, who has just died. Entering his body, I will study the nature of the conjugal *rasa*. If I am very late in returning, then recite the verses from the book called *Moḥa-muḍgara*. By doing so, I will give up my attachment for that body and come back here.”

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya performed that astonishing feat, and when the dead king came back to life, his queen and other palace residents were overjoyed. He stayed there and studied the *Kāma-sāstra*.

Meanwhile, Śaṅkarācārya’s disciples waited while protecting the dead body of their *ācārya*. After the prescribed time was over and still the *ācārya* did not return, the disciples thought that he must have become attached to the body of the king. Thereafter, the disciples posed as singers and entered the royal palace, and on the pretext of

singing, they chanted the verses of the *Moḥa-muḍgara*. Immediately, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya returned to his original consciousness and, after seeing his disciples and giving up the king’s body, he entered his original body.

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya then went to Bhāratī, and by giving a proper answer to her question, he defeated her in their scriptural debate. He converted Maṇḍana Miśra and Bhāratī, making them followers of the *kevalādvaita* philosophy. Later on, Maṇḍana Miśra accepted *sannyāsa* from the *ācārya* and became known as Sureśvarānanda.

Another day, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya defeated all the Sevaḍās in scriptural argument. At that time, he met the king, who was prepared to become his disciple. Then the *guru* of the Sevaḍās created an illusory display. The king and Śaṅkarācārya, along with the Sevaḍās, sat on a raised platform. By the illusory display, water began to pour in from all directions so that it seemed that the raised platform would soon be submerged. Suddenly, an illusory boat appeared on the scene. The Sevaḍās requested Śrī Śaṅkarācārya to climb onto the boat, but the *ācārya* understood the illusory nature of the whole scenario and so did not get onto the boat.

The frightened king was about to climb onto the boat but Śrī Śaṅkarācārya stopped him, saying, “First let the Sevaḍās get onto the boat.” The king ordered all of them to get onto the boat, and finally, he physically pushed them on. Actually, there was neither water nor boat. It was simply an illusory trick. As a result, all the Sevaḍās fell down

from the raised platform and broke their limbs so that the illusion was destroyed. The king fell at the feet of Śaṅkarācārya with great faith and devotion. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya then gave the king many instructions, and he accepted them all. Indeed, he became a saintly person, and his subjects also became saintly in behavior. In this way, Śaṅkarācārya preached the glories of *bhakti* all over India.

Later, on by the inspiration of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya propagated the philosophy of Māyāvāda (Advaitavāda) to some of his disciples. Because of this, many people became averse to the Lord. But those who were sincere and serious *sannyāsīs* who knew the truth of Vedic culture remained devoted to the Supreme Lord, for they knew that the Lord's form and qualities are eternal. They were firmly convinced that the Absolute Truth is not formless and devoid of qualities.

❁ Additional Comments ❁

In Kerala, South India, on the shore of the River Pūrṇā, there is a village known as Kalāndi (Kalti). In that village there lived a couple named Śrī Śivaguru and Subhadra. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya appeared in that village as their son on the fifth day of the waxing moon in the month of Vaiśākha in the year 788 A.D. Being pleased by the couple's austerities, Lord Śiva personally appeared as their son, and therefore he was named Śaṅkara. When he was three years old, Śaṅkara's father left this world. At the age of five, he underwent

the sacred thread ceremony, and at the age of seven he studied all the *Vedas* and Vedic literatures.

One day, while residing at the *gurukula*, Śaṅkara went to beg alms from a poor *brāhmaṇī's* house. She had nothing to offer and so the young Śaṅkara pleased goddess Lakṣmī by offering Her the Śrī Lakṣmī-kanakadhārā prayers, and as a result, the house became filled with wealth.

Śrī Śaṅkara was very devoted to his mother. After finishing his education, he was an enlightened soul and so he asked his mother for permission to take *sannyāsa*. He was the only son and therefore the only support of his mother. Being bound by the ropes of affection, his mother could not give him permission to take *sannyāsa*. Then one day, Śrī Śaṅkara went with his mother to take bath in the Pūrṇā River. Suddenly a crocodile caught hold of Śaṅkara's leg. As his mother began to cry, Śaṅkara informed her that the crocodile was saying that if she gave him permission to take *sannyāsa* then it would let him go. This was a divine pastime of the great *ācārya*. In this way, the mother gave him permission to accept the renounced order of life. When he returned home and asked his mother to confirm her decision, she began to cry and said, "O dear Śaṅkara, who will perform the last rites after my death?" Śaṅkara replied, "I will do it." The mother said, "Alright, you can take *sannyāsa*, but after doing so, you must come and see your mother once."

Taking permission from his mother,

Śrī Śaṅkara approached Śrī Govinda Bhagavatpādācārya on the shore of the River Narmadā and accepted the renounced order of life from him according to the prescribed rules and regulations. His spiritual master gave him the *sannyāsa* name Bhagavatpūjyapādācārya. Śrī Śaṅkara then lived with his spiritual master and served him for some time, and then took permission from him and went to Kāśī. There he wrote his commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*.

Vedavyāsa personally appeared in the form of a *brāhmaṇa* and inquired about the confidential meanings of *śāstra*. During the ensuing discussion, when the *brāhmaṇa* did not give a proper reply to one of his inquiries, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya told his disciple, Padmācārya, to dismiss him. The exalted Padmācārya recognized that his spiritual master was directly Lord Śiva, and that the *brāhmaṇa* was actually Vyāsadeva, who is an incarnation of Lord Nārāyaṇa. He was thus confused about what to do in this situation. Finally, Vyāsadeva revealed himself, and after praising Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on *Vedānta*, he disappeared from view.

One day, as Śaṅkara ran towards the Gaṅgā, he was chased by some dogs. Some of his opponents commented: "If the body is a temporary illusion then why are you running away out of fear of death?" Śrī Śaṅkarācārya replied, "My running away is also a temporary illusion."

Once, Lord Viśvanātha gave him his *darśana* in the form of a *caṇḍāla*. Still, Śaṅkara recognized Lord Śiva and fell

at his feet. According to Lord Śiva's instructions, Śaṅkara gave up the mentality of untouchability. Lord Śiva ordered him to write literatures and preach religious principles all over India. Thereafter, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya traveled throughout India, hoisting the victory flag of Vedic religion by defeating many contrary religious systems.

While traveling and preaching, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya received the news of his mother's ill health, and according to his previous promise, he went to see her. His mother said, "Śaṅkara! You have written many books of instructions. Tell me something as well."

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya recited the book named *Tattva-bodha* to his mother and explained the meaning. Still, his mother said, "I could not understand anything and so recite to me some prayers glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa." Śrī Śaṅkarācārya instantly composed Śrī Kṛṣṇaṣṭaka (eight verses glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa) and recited them to his mother. She then left this world and went to the spiritual world while meditating on the lotus feet of the Lord. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya performed his mother's last rites and thus established the ideal example of devotion to one's mother.

When Śrī Śaṅkarācārya set out to propagate religious principles, he went to Māhiṣmatīpurī and discussed scriptural conclusions with Śrī Maṇḍana Mīśra, who was the *ācārya* of Mimāṃśaka. He went to Pratiṣṭhānapura and debated with Śrī Prabhākaraācārya, he went to Takṣaśilā and challenged the Buddhist *ācāryas*, and in Kāmarūpa he

challenged and defeated the followers of the Śākta philosophy. These debates are well-documented in the history of religion.

A worshiper of goddess Kālī, named Ugrabhairava, tried to subdue Śrī Śaṅkarācārya with his *yantras*, *mantras*, and *tantras*, as well as by hatching a conspiracy, but by the will of the Lord, he could not succeed in any of his attempts. Finally, he made a show of humbly serving Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. As a benediction, he asked for the *ācārya*'s head to be offered in sacrifice in front of goddess Kālī so that his evil motives could be fulfilled. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya was ready to offer his head. The Kālī worshiper took a sword and was about to cut off Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's head as he was sitting in *samādhī*, but Lord Nṛsiṃha empowered his disciple, Śrī Padmācārya, and ordered him to go to that place. Śrī Padmācārya went there, snatched the sword from the Kālī worshiper's hand, and cut off his head. In this way, Śaṅkarācārya performed many extraordinary activities in this world.

Once, some Tibetans took away the Deity of the Lord situated at Badrikāśrama, but Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, along with his disciples, utilized his divine prowess to bring the Deity back and have Him reinstalled. There are so many wonderful pastimes of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. He blessed a dumb person to speak, brought a dead person back to life, imparted knowledge to those who were grossly ignorant, and performed many other astonishing pastimes.

One day upon witnessing Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's

glories, some envious people began residing with him with some hidden motives. In order to test him, they once drank wine instead of water, using as an excuse the aphorism *sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ brahma*, or "everything is Brahman." Those who were his genuine disciples did not drink wine, because it is not proper to imitate one's spiritual master. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya drank the entire bottle of wine while exhibiting an extraordinary mood. Seeing this, his ignorant followers fell down at his feet. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya said, "You are all pretendars. You have misunderstood the purport of the scriptures. Without genuine knowledge of Brahman, you drank wine. There is no atonement for this sin. Therefore you will all go astray. Later on, these followers left the school of monism and started their own movement.

While propagating his mission, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya established many *maṭhas* and temples all over India. Among the *maṭhas*, four were principal. These are Govardhana-maṭha at Jagannātha Purī, Śṛṅgerī-maṭha in South India, Sārādā-maṭha at Dvārakā, and Jyotir-maṭha in Uttarākhaṇḍa. He gave charge of these *maṭhas* to his disciples—Śrī Padmācārya, Śrī Sureśvarācārya, Śrī Hastāmālākācārya, and Śrī Toṭakācārya. There are approximately 272 literatures compiled by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. Among them, his commentaries on Brahma-sūtra, the Upaniṣads, and Bhagavata Gītā, as well as Vivekacūḍāmaṇī are the principal ones. He composed many prayers about devotional service. He lived in this world for thirty-

two years and worked vigorously for the benefit of all people. Finally, in 877 Śakābda era, he left this world at Kedāranātha. His philosophy is known as *kevalādvaita-vāda*.

❀ **Text 43** ❀

I will see my worshipable Lord everywhere; in the water, on the land, in fire, and so on. This determination of Śrī Nāmadeva was fulfilled, just as how in the Tretā-yuga, Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva's dear devotee, Śrī Prahlāda, attained this divine vision. In Śrī Nāmadeva's childhood, Lord Viṭṭhala-deva drank milk from his hand. He revived a dead cow and thus showed the power of his *bhajana* to the Yavanas and demons. He threw a bed given by the king of the Yavanas into a river and then, at his request, produced many similar beds from out of the water. The temple door of Lord Paṇḍarīnātha at Paṇḍarapura changed directions to turn towards him. Seeing this wonderful incident, all the *pujārīs* and learned *brāhmaṇas* felt ashamed. By the influence of his loving devotion, Lord Paṇḍuranātha followed him like a menial servant wherever he went. The Supreme Lord personally provided shelter with His own hands when Śrī Nāmadeva's cottage was burning.

❀ **Commentary** ❀

There was a devotee of Lord Harideva named Śrī Vāmadeva, who belonged to a

family of tailors. He had a daughter who became a widow when she was still very young. When she was twelve-years-old, Vāmadeva told her, "You should serve the Lord that is present in our house with faith and devotion. Then all of your desires will be fulfilled. It is the Lord who can fulfill everyone's desires. If you obey my order then all your desires will be fulfilled very soon."

Being thus ordered by her father, the girl began serving the Lord. Within a short time the Lord became very pleased and awarded her His *darśana*. After seeing the beautiful form of the Lord, whatever desire manifested in her mind was fulfilled. This is a fact that you should all have faith in.

Vāmadeva's daughter desired to have a devotee son and so, by the blessings of the Supreme Lord, she became pregnant. Everyone in the neighborhood began discussing her pregnancy. Eventually, this news came to Vāmadeva, who then asked his daughter about this. After hearing her reply, he concluded, "It is the Supreme Lord who has accepted my daughter, and by His blessing she became pregnant."

In due course of time the girl gave birth to a male child, and Vāmadeva named him Śrī Nāmadeva. The father pompously celebrated the birth ceremony of the son. He gave charity to the *brāhmaṇas* and the poor. The child, Nāmadeva, grew up, day by day. He was a special boy with divine power. His body was very charming for everyone to behold.

Śrī Nāmadeva played with dolls in his childhood, and in all of his childhood activities, he had a devotional mentality and service attitude. After watching his grandfather offer *pūjā*, he offered *pūjā* in the same way while playing. He would make a form of the Lord out of wood or stone and then decorate Him with nice cloth, offer *bhoga*, ring a bell, and meditate on Him with his eyes closed. The more he engaged in such activities, the more he felt transcendental happiness. Tears of love often flowed from his eyes. He would frequently ask his grandfather, “Now you have become old and so please allow me to serve the Lord. I would like to serve the Lord and so kindly engage me in His service.”

After Nāmadeva had repeatedly requested his grandfather in this way, Vāmadeva finally said, “I am going to another village for three days. You engage in the Lord’s service in my absence. Offer Him milk every day. The Lord is very dear to me. If you serve Him nicely then I will permanently hand over the service to you.”

While his grandfather was away, Śrī Nāmadeva got up one morning as usual and, after taking his bath, began worshiping the Lord. Then he took two *kilos* of milk from the pot and decided to boil it so that it would taste very nice. Śrī Nāmadeva was very eager to serve the Lord with devotion. His eyes became filled with tears as he boiled the milk to offer to the Lord. Meanwhile, his mother called and said, “You are very late. Why have you not made the offering?”

Nāmadeva replied, “Do not worry. I am boiling the milk so that the Lord will happily drink it.”

The young boy, Nāmadeva, poured the condensed milk into a bowl and brought it before the Lord. He added cardamom and sugar candy to the condensed milk. At that time his mind was filled with great joy, but on the other hand, he was also fearful that he might not commit a mistake. He thought, “If my Lord accepts my service and engages me in His service, I will feel very happy.” Thinking like this, Śrī Nāmadeva looked at the Lord and saw that He was smiling at him while appearing as effulgent as millions of moons. Being impressed by Nāmadeva’s pure and heartfelt feelings, the Supreme Lord smilingly accepted his service and expressed His delight. As a result of this, Nāmadeva became filled with transcendental love. So that the Lord could drink the milk, Nāmadeva closed the curtain. Then after awhile, when he opened the curtain, he saw that the milk was still there. He became very disappointed and prayed to the Lord, “My dear Lord! Kindly drink the milk and be satisfied.”

Śrī Nāmadeva offered milk to the Lord every day and always found that the Lord had not drunk it. In this way three days passed. Because of this, Śrī Nāmadeva also stopped eating and drinking, but he did not reveal this to anyone. Even his mother did not know about this, and he would go to sleep with an empty stomach. On the third morning, as usual, he boiled the milk nicely,

added cardamom and sugar candy, and placed it before the Lord, thinking that this day He would surely drink it. But despite his request, the Lord did not drink the milk.

Finally, Śrī Nāmadeva said to the Lord, “I am repeatedly requesting You to drink the milk, but you don’t drink it. Tomorrow morning, my grandfather will return and he will be angry with me and take away my service. Therefore it would be better for me to end my life rather than live in such a devotionless situation.”

Saying this, Nāmadeva took a knife and was about to cut his throat, but suddenly the Lord caught hold of his hand and said, “Don’t act like this! I will drink the milk right now.” After saying this, the Supreme Lord began drinking the milk.

On the fourth day, his grandfather, Vāmadeva, returned home and asked Nāmadeva if the service and worship had been going on properly. With great happiness Nāmadeva explained the whole incident of the Lord’s drinking milk and then said, “The Supreme Lord and I did not know each other and so it took three days for Him to finally drink the milk I offered.”

After hearing about this wonderful incident, Vāmadeva said, “Offer milk to the Lord and let him drink it. Then I will know that what you have said is true. How can I trust you, for there is no witness to support your story?”

Thereafter, Nāmadeva prepared the milk and with love and devotion offered it to the Lord. However, the Lord did not drink the

milk and so Nāmadeva again took a knife and prepared to kill himself. He said to the Lord, “Yesterday You drank the milk, and today you are making me a liar in front of my grandfather. You have to drink the milk.”

When young Nāmadeva forced Him like this out of love and devotion, the Lord drank the milk in front of Vāmadeva and left a small portion as *prasāda* for Nāmadeva. Vāmadeva was astonished and thought, “I served this Deity throughout my entire life, but I never had His *darśana*. Today, by the devotion of this boy, I was fortunate to get the *darśana* of the Lord.”

In this incident, the Supreme Lord displayed the truth that He is under the control of His devotee, and that He only accepts offerings made to Him with love and devotion.

Once, a Muslim King, Sikandar Lodhi, called for Śrī Nāmadeva and said, “You met the Lord and you see Him from time to time. I have heard this and so arrange a meeting between me and the Lord and thereby display your extraordinary prowess.”

However, Śrī Nāmadeva replied, “If I had any spiritual prowess then why would I run around here and there the whole day begging for food? Somehow or other I am earning my livelihood. The important thing is that whatever I earn by sewing clothes, I share with the devotees, and by the influence of serving these saintly persons, the Lord has recognized me.”

The King said, “Revive this dead cow which is lying nearby, and then you can go

home. Otherwise I will put you in prison. People like you cheat the innocent public.”

In his own unique mood, Śrī Nāmadeva sang a prayer to the Lord and revived the cow. He felt overjoyed by experiencing the Lord’s mercy. The King was very happy to witness Nāmadeva’s extraordinary prowess, and he fell at his feet. The King requested Śrī Nāmadeva, “Kindly take some land in a village for your maintenance, for by doing so, my reputation will be enhanced.”

However, Śrī Nāmadeva simply replied, “I do not want anything.” Next, the king offered him a bed bedecked with jewels. Nāmadeva put the bed on his head and began walking back to his residence. Seeing this, the King said, “I will send some people with you to carry the bed to your house.” But Nāmadeva adamantly refused any assistance. He thought that the nice bed belonged to the Supreme Lord and that he was His servant and so it was proper for him to carry it on his head. Still, the king sent a few guards with Śrī Nāmadeva.

On the way, Śrī Nāmadeva considered the following: “This is a very valuable item and so it might invite some danger and thus place obstacles in the way of my *bhajana*. Therefore I should throw it in the water of the River Yamunā.”

Thinking like this, Śrī Nāmadeva threw the bed into the Yamunā. When the king was informed about this, he was shocked and told the guards, “Bring him to me immediately.” Thus Śrī Nāmadeva was again brought before the king. He inquired,

“Why have you summoned me?” The king asked him to return the bed which he had given him, so that carpenters could prepare a new one.

Śrī Nāmadeva took the king to the shore of the river and entered the water. He pulled out the bed, along with many other valuable and similar beds, and said, “Can you recognize which is the bed you gave me?” Seeing this wonderful display of mystic power, the king became struck with wonder, but at the same time he was very fearful and so he fell down at Śrī Nāmadeva’s feet.

The King appealed to Śrī Nāmadeva, saying, “Please save me from the wrath of God. I have tested you and so God must be very unhappy with me and will surely punish me. Only you can forgive this offence of mine.”

Śrī Nāmadevajī replied in a gentle and soothing voice, “If you wish to be forgiven then do not give trouble to any saintly person in the future.” The king gladly accepted this. Thereafter, Śrī Nāmadeva left that place, having made up his mind to visit the temple of Paṇḍarīnātha. Every day, his main business was chanting the holy names of the Lord and glorifying His transcendental qualities.

When Śrī Nāmadeva arrived at the temple, he saw a crowd in front of the gate. He took off his shoes and, after wrapping them in a cloth, tied them to his waist and slowly made his way inside the temple by manoeuvring through the crowd. After having the *darśana* of the Lord, he sat down and began to sing.

At that time someone saw Śrī Nāmadeva's shoes, and out of anger, slapped him. He then pushed Śrī Nāmadeva out of the temple. And yet, in Śrī Nāmadeva's mind there was not even a tinge of anger against that *pāṇḍā*.

Śrī Nāmadeva went behind the temple and sat down. He prayed to the Lord "O Lord, it is very kind of You that You had me beaten. I don't resent that, for I received just punishment for my offence. O Lord, I do not want anything from You. This place behind Your temple is suitable for me to sing about Your glories as I do every day. Kindly listen to me."

Saying this, Śrī Nāmadeva began to sing in glorification of the Lord. When He heard these songs, the Lord's heart became filled with compassion. Realizing His devotee's mood of separation and humility, the Lord became overwhelmed with love. In order to give Śrī Nāmadeva His *darśana*, and to see His dear devotee, the Lord turned the entire temple in such a way that its main entrance became just in front of him. In this way both the Lord and His devotee became satisfied, but the faces of the temple *pujārīs* and *pāṇḍās* dried up. Still, from that incident they came to have faith and devotion for Śrī Nāmadeva. All of them fell down at his feet and begged his pardon.

Once, as Śrī Nāmadeva was engaged in the service of the Lord, his house was suddenly engulfed in flames. Still, Śrī Nāmadeva was a great devotee of the Lord and so he could worship Him anywhere, even in water, or in fire, as well as on the land. So whatever was

not burnt, including some ghee, he collected and offered in the fire. He prayed, "O my Lord, kindly accept these offerings."

In response, the Lord personally manifested Himself and asked, "My form is so soft and sublime, and yet you can see Me even in this unbearable blazing fire?"

Śrī Nāmadeva replied, "My Lord, this is Your house. Who other than You deserves to be here?" The Lord was very pleased and then disappeared from that place, and immediately, the fire was extinguished.

The next day, Lord Kṛṣṇa and Rukmīṇī came there in the form of laborers and constructed a cottage for Śrī Nāmadeva, which was as beautiful as the Lord Himself. Rakmīṇī-devī personally smeared soil and cow dung all over it to make it look attractive and clean. When the villagers saw the beauty of the cottage, they were astonished and asked Śrī Nāmadeva, "Who has built this? We will also construct such cottages, and we will pay the laborers whatever they demand." Śrī Nāmadeva replied, "To build a cottage like this, you will have to sacrifice your body, mind, life, and everything else."

There was no limit to the love and devotion of Śrī Nāmadeva. Kindly hear me attentively as I describe the characteristics of a pure devotee. After hearing about these characteristics, if one does not become attracted to the Supreme Lord then why didn't that person's mother remain barren? In other words, the life of such a person is in vain.

There lived a rich landlord in Pāṇḍarapura.

He held a festival in which he distributed gold in charity. He weighed himself, and then he distributed that quantity of gold to all the saintly persons and *brāhmaṇas* in the city. When the landlord asked the people if anyone was left out, they said that there was a great devotee of the Lord named Śrī Nāmadeva who should be invited. When the landlord's people went to call Śrī Nāmadeva, he refused, saying, "Give all the charity to the *brāhmaṇas*. I don't need anything."

The greatly fortunate Śrī Nāmadeva refused the charity when he was asked the first time, and he also refused the second time. When the servants of the landlord came for the third time, Śrī Nāmadeva went with them and said to the master, "You are very fortunate. Tell me, what do you want from me?"

The landlord replied, "Please accept the charity I wish to give you. In this way my life will be successful." Śrī Nāmadeva said, "You are already fortunate, but if you have a strong desire to give me something, then give me what I ask for."

Śrī Nāmadeva took a *tulasī* leaf, which is very dear to Lord Govinda, and wrote half of the holy name of Rāma (Rā) on it and gave it to the landlord, saying, "Give me something equivalent to the weight of this *tulasī* leaf."

The landlord proudly replied, "Mahārāja, why are you joking with me? What will you do with such a tiny amount of gold? Please take something more." Still, Śrī Nāmadeva mildly replied, "First let me have the gold

that is equivalent to this leaf and then I will ask for something more. If you give me the gold which is equivalent to this, then I will be satisfied to you."

Hearing this, the landlord brought a scale and weighted the *tulasī* leaf, along with some gold. At that time something wonderful happened. The lump of gold which he placed on the scale did not equal the weight of the *tulasī* leaf. The landlord was certainly surprised and apprehensive. He then arranged for a bigger scale. On one side he placed the *tulasī* leaf, and on the other side he placed more and more gold until finally he placed all the gold and silver he had in his house. He then borrowed gold from his relatives but still it was not equivalent to the weight of the *tulasī* leaf. Realizing the greatness of the *tulasī* leaf on which half of the holy name of Lord Rāma was written, the landlord and all his family members felt ashamed.

Śrī Nāmadeva thought that the people did not understand the glories of the *tulasī* leaf and the holy name of Śrī Rāma, and so he told them, "Please do not feel sad. Do as I tell you so that perhaps you will then be able to weigh the *tulasī* leaf. Some of you must have observed vows, given charity, visited holy places, etc. Offer all the piety you had accumulated by these activities in an attempt to weigh the *tulasī* leaf."

All the household people took water in their hands and offered the results of their pious activities, but still the landlord's intention was not fulfilled because the weight

was insufficient. When the landlord failed to fulfill his promise, he became embarrassed and appealed to Nāmadeva, saying, “Please take whatever I have in my possession.”

Śrī Nāmadeva replied, “What will I do with such insignificant wealth? I have the treasure of Lord Rāmacandra’s holy name. Your wealth cannot match the wealth of the Lord’s holy name. You will never be satisfied, or even benefitted, by material wealth. Give up your attachment for material wealth and become enriched with spiritual wealth in the form of Lord’s holy name.”

In this way Śrī Nāmadeva changed the hearts of the people and filled them with love and devotion for the Lord.

One day, the Supreme Lord decided to test how Śrī Nāmadeva was observing the vow of Ekādaśī. The Lord took the form of a weak *brāhmaṇa*, and on Ekādaśī he went to Śrī Nāmadeva’s place and very humbly begged for some rice. The Lord said, “I am very hungry, for I have not eaten for a few days. Kindly give me some rice to eat.” Śrī Nāmadeva replied, “Today is Ekādaśī and so I will give you some milk and fruit. I cannot offer you even a grain of rice today. Tomorrow morning you can take as much rice as you like.”

Both of them remained stubborn in their respective stances. Soon the news spread all over and so many people gathered at Nāmadeva’s house. They explained to Nāmadeva that it was not proper to become angry at a hungry *brāhmaṇa*, and so he should give him some rice. Still, Śrī Nāmadeva did

not agree with these people. In the evening the hungry *brāhmaṇa* fell to the ground in such a way as if he had died. The people of the village did not know the exalted position of Śrī Nāmadeva and so they accused him of killing a *brāhmaṇa* and ostracized him from society. Still, Nāmadeva was not at all alarmed.

As he was accustomed to do, Nāmadeva stayed up the entire night, chanting the holy names of the Lord, and in the morning he arranged a funeral pyre. Taking the dead body of the *brāhmaṇa* on his lap, he sat on the pyre and set fire to it. He considered that there was no need to keep the body which killed the *brāhmaṇa* alive—rather it should be burnt as atonement. Just then the Supreme Lord appeared there and smilingly said, “I was only testing you. I have seen your genuine faith in the vow of Ekādaśī, and I am impressed.” After saying this, the Lord disappeared. When the people saw this pastime, they fell at the feet of Nāmadeva. By seeing his loving devotion, they all became devotees of the Lord.

One day, as the devotees were performing *kīrtana* while staying up all night on Ekādaśī, they felt thirsty and so Śrī Nāmadeva went to the river to fetch some water. Usually no one went to that river at night out of fear of a ghost. When the king of ghosts saw Śrī Nāmadeva, he and his companions surrounded him. They all looked very fearful, but Śrī Nāmadeva was not at all afraid. On the contrary, he began singing a song in glorification of the Lord, and he offered his

obesiances. The Lord is always very kind. Immediately all the ghosts disappeared. The Supreme Lord then awarded his *darśana*, which pleased Śrī Nāmadeva greatly. Thereafter Śrī Nāmadeva brought water from the river and gave it to the devotees to drink.

❁ Text 44 ❁

Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī was the emperor of learned poets in the Sanskrit language. All the other poets of the country were junior to him. He wrote the famous book, *Gīta-govinda*, which is one of the foremost literatures within in the three worlds. Its literary composition with the use of ornamental language is extraordinary. It is filled with the mellows of the Lord's conjugal pastimes. If someone recites this literature every day, his intelligence becomes purified, and he will surely become a pure devotee of the Supreme Lord. Wherever Śrī *Gīta-govinda* is recited, the Supreme Lord, Rādhā-ramaṇa, certainly appears and is very pleased. Śrī Jayadeva, the husband of Śrī Padmāvatī, appeared in this world like a sun which brought pleasure to the lotus flower-like devotees of the Lord.

❁ Commentary ❁

The emperor-poet Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī appeared in the village of Kenduvilva in

the district of Bīrabhūma in West Bengal. He was an ocean of *śṛṅgāra* rasa, which is the topmost of all the *rasas*. He would continuously relish this *rasa* within his mind. He was so detached from materialistic life that he would live every night under a different tree and leave that place the next morning out of fear of becoming attached. His only assets were a patchwork quilt and a water pot.

There was a *brāhmaṇa* from South India named Sudeva who had no son and so prayed to Lord Jagannātha, "O Lord! If I ever get a son, I will give him to You. Whether a boy or a girl, I will give my first child to you." After some time, the *brāhmaṇa* received a daughter. When she was twelve-years-old, the *brāhmaṇa* brought her to the temple of Lord Jagannātha and appealed to the Lord, "O Lord! As I promised, I brought my first child to You. Here is my daughter." Immediately Lord Jagannātha ordered Sudeva: "There is a devotee named Jayadeva. He is an exalted personality and non-different from Me. Take your daughter to him and ask him to accept her hand in marriage. You can tell him that this is Lord Jagannātha's order."

Being ordered by the Lord, the *brāhmaṇa* went to the forest with his daughter and met the emperor of poets, Śrī Jayadeva. The *brāhmaṇa* said, "O Mahārāja, kindly accept my daughter as your wife and engage her in your service."

Śrī Jayadeva replied, "O *brāhmaṇa*, what are you saying? At least consider that I am a poor person living in the forest. You should

give your daughter to a qualified *brāhmaṇa* who has the right to accept her hand, and who is well-situated in society.”

The *brāhmaṇa* said, “I was ordered by Lord Jagannātha to give my daughter to you and so it your duty to obey His command. Please do not think of disobeying the Lord’s order, for if you do so, you will be tainted by the offence of violating His command.”

Jayadeva mildly said, “Forget about Lord Jagannātha’s words, for He can keep thousands of women in His service and it would simply enhance His beauty. But for me to keep one wife seems to me a huge burden. Therefore I will not accept your daughter. Take her and return home.”

The *brāhmaṇa* was greatly disappointed and somewhat upset because of Śrī Jayadeva’s refusal to obey the Lord’s order. He turned to his daughter and said, “I must follow Lord’s Jagannātha order. I cannot disobey Him. Therefore you must stay here with firm determination.”

Although Śrī Jayadeva tried his best to convince the *brāhmaṇa* in various ways, he did not accept his arguments and left that place in an unhappy mood. Jayadeva was certainly confused about what he should do with the young girl. Finally he spoke to the *brāhmaṇa*’s daughter, saying, “Consider very nicely what is your duty in life. Use your wisdom to determine what sort of husband is suitable for you. I will not be able to carry out the responsibility of maintaining you.”

Hearing this, the young daughter folded her hands and said, “There is nothing in my

control. I will remain equipoised, no matter what happens, whether it brings happiness or distress, because I have dedicated my life to you.”

The girl’s name was Śrī Padmāvatī. After hearing Padmāvatī’s staunch words, Śrī Jayadeva realized that Lord Jagannātha was utilizing His prowess to fulfill His own ambition and thus had sent this girl to him, and that now she would become his lifelong partner. Thinking like this, Jayadeva considered that he must construct a cottage to shelter his wife. Thus it came to be that he constructed a cottage, and in that cottage he installed a Deity of Lord Śyāmasundara so that His wife could render Him service.

Later on, Jayadeva thought that he should compose a literature in which the sublime pastimes of the Supreme Lord are poetically described. Thus it came to be that he composed Śrī Gīta-govinda. While writing this book, he happened to describe some anger-filled pastimes of the young cowherd damsel, Śrī Rādhikā. While narrating those pastimes, he described how Lord Śyāmasundara had fallen at the feet of His beloved Rādhā, desiring to adorn His head with their dust. He prayed, “Please place Your lotus feet upon My head.”

This act of the Lord captured Śrī Jayadeva’s heart, but since he was dictating while Padmāvatī wrote, he was in a dilemma about how to reveal the mystery of this pastime. Putting his work aside at that point, Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī went to take his bath. Then when he returned, he saw

that Lord Śyāmasundara had miraculously written those lines in his book. Śrī Jayadeva became ecstatic and in that mood gave up all hesitation about how to sing descriptions of the sweet pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

There lived a learned king in Jagannātha Purī. He also wrote a nice book and named it *Gīta-govinda*, and it also contained descriptions of the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The king called the *brāhmaṇas* and ordered them, "This book is *Gīta-govinda*. You must promote it and preach it as widely as possible. Make copies of this book and distribute them in different countries."

After hearing the king's order, the *brāhmaṇas* brought the original *Gīta-govinda* and said, "O King, yours seems to be a new book of the same name. It is not the original *Gīta-govinda*."

This created confusion in the minds of the people. Finally, in order to test which was the original of the two *Gīta-govindas*, the *brāhmaṇas* placed both books in front of Lord Jagannātha. Later in the day, when they opened the curtain, they saw that Lord Jagannātha had thrown away the king's *Gīta-govinda* and was pressing Śrī Jayadeva's *Gīta-govinda* to His heart.

Because of this, the king was ashamed. Realizing that this was a great insult to his book, he became depressed and so he walked towards the sea. Indeed, he had decided to jump into the ocean and end his life. He thought, "I also described Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes just as well as Jayadeva had done and yet Lord Jagannātha has insulted me.

How can I tolerate it and remove the shame from my heart?"

As the king was about to give up his life, the Lord appeared before him and said, "Do not end your life like this. There cannot be another *Gīta-govinda* like the one composed by Śrī Jayadeva, for he is the foremost of poets. Therefore it is foolish to give up your life. You can do this: add your own twelve verses in one of the twelve *sargas* of *Gīta-govinda*. In that way your twelve verses will become famous throughout the land."

One day, a gardener's daughter sang the fifth verse of the *Gīta-govinda* while picking eggplants in the field. To hear that sweet song, Lord Jagannātha, dressed in fine cloth, arrived there and walked behind the girl. The Lord repeatedly said, 'Very good' 'Very good' as He relished her singing. At that time the Lord remembered how He would feel the pain of separation when Śrī Rādhā became angry with Him. As Lord Jagannātha helplessly wandered behind the girl in ecstatic love, His dress became torn because of the thorns in the field. When the girl stopped singing, the Lord returned to His temple. When the *pujārīs* saw the Lord's torn cloth, they were astonished and inquired among themselves: "What is this? What has happened? How has the Lord's dress become torn?"

Thereafter, Lord Jagannātha revealed the incident and said, "*Gīta-govinda* is very dear to Me." The King sent his palanquin to bring the girl. She came, sang the verses of *Gīta-govinda*, and danced beautifully,

greatly pleasing Lord Jagannātha. From that day onward, the king made it a rule that the verses of *Gīta-govinda* would be recited every day in the temple of Lord Jagannātha in Purī.

From this incident, the King of Purī understood the importance of reciting *Gīta-govinda*, and he made a proclamation that whether one is rich or poor, it is the duty of everyone to sit in a temple or in a garden and recite *Gīta-govinda*. He emphasized that the people should pronounce the words correctly and sing the verses melodiously. Indeed, they should think that Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are personally listening to their recitation.

After hearing this proclamation, a Muslim leader from Multan copied the *Gīta-govinda* and memorized it. Whenever he would ride on his horse, he would think that the Supreme Lord was present before him and so he would sing. One such day, he suddenly saw that Lord Śyāmasundara was actually following him and listening to the prayers of *Gīta-govinda*. The Muslim king got down from his horse and offered his obeisances to the Lord by touching His lotus feet. He was so emotionally overwhelmed that he renounced his royal duties and accepted the dress of a mendicant. The glories of *Gīta-govinda* are without limit, and exalted devotees never fail to praise it. The celestial women of heaven frequently sing these prayers. Who can describe the glories of this literature in which Lord Kṛṣṇa personally wrote some of the lines?

❀ Commentary ❀

I have thus described the glories of *Gīta-govinda*. Now hear about Śrī Jayadeva's devotional characteristics, such as his detachment, renunciation, tolerance, and other exalted qualities. One day, one of his servants invited Śrī Jayadeva to his house. The servant wanted to give him some coins as *dakṣiṇā*. Although Śrī Jayadeva refused to accept them, the servant stealthily tied the coins in the corner of his *cā dara*. Then as Śrī Jayadeva was returning to his āśrama, he happened to meet some thieves.

Śrī Jayadeva asked, "Where are you going?" The thieves replied, "We are going to the same place you are going." From this Śrī Jayadeva understood that they were plunderers and so he untied the coins from his cloth and gave them to the thieves, saying, "Kindly take as many of these as you want, and return the rest to me." The thieves thought, "This person is very claver. Out of fear he has given us everything without our even asking, but later on, when we arrive at a town, he will have us arrested." Thinking like this, the thieves kept some distance from Śrī Jayadeva while continuing to walk.

One of the thieves whispered to the others, "I think it is best if we kill him." Another said that since they had already gotten much wealth from him, there was no use in killing him. Another thief warned, "If later on he recognizes us and appeals to the king to punish us, what will we do?" Then the fourth thief gave his opinion, saying, "Do not kill him, and do not leave him. We should cut off

his hands and legs and throw him in a ditch.”

Everyone agreed with this idea and so they cut off Śrī Jayadeva’s hands and legs and, after throwing him into a ditch, returned home. After a short while, a king (Laksman Singh) passed by on that road. When he saw Śrī Jayadeva performing *saṅkīrtana*, his good sense prevailed. First he saw a divine effulgence coming from the ditch, and then he found Śrī Jayadeva joyfully performing *saṅkīrtana* even though his hands and legs had been severed. The king pulled Jayadeva out of the ditch and saw that he was shining like another moon-god. When the king asked about the reason for his present condition, Śrī Jayadeva simply answered, “By destiny I have received this kind of body.”

Gradually, as the king viewed Śrī Jayadeva and heard his sweet words, he understood that this person was a great and powerful personality. The king considered himself most fortunate to have met such an exalted personality and so he put Jayadeva on a palanquin and brought him to his palace. With medical treatment, he cured all the wounds on his hands and legs. Then the king appealed to Śrī Jayadeva, “I had a desire to have the association of a pure devotee, and now that desire has been fulfilled. Kindly order me. What service can I perform for you?”

Śrī Jayadeva humbly replied, “O King, please arrange for a variety of sweets and other foodstuffs, offer them to the Supreme Lord, and respectfully distribute His *prasāda* to all the devotees. You should always be

prepared to greet and serve the Lord’s devotees.”

Being thus ordered by Śrī Jayadeva, the king began serving the devotees in various ways, and his fame in this regard spread in all directions. One day those same thieves dressed as devotees, wearing neck beads and having *tilaka* on their foreheads, and came to the king. Seeing them, Śrī Jayadeva happily exclaimed, “Look! Today my senior godbrothers had come!” He then proceeded to respectfully greet them. Śrī Jayadeva treated the thieves as devotees of the Lord, and in that mood informed the king: “These are great devotees and their hearts are filled with love of God. Today you are fortunate because they have arrived at your house. Serve them with faith and devotion and be blessed.”

Receiving this order, the king took the thieves inside the palace and engaged his servants in serving them. Nice foodstuffs were prepared. Still, the minds of those four thieves were filled with anxiety because of their sinful lives. They were also afraid that Śrī Jayadeva might recognize them, for if he did, the king would surely kill them. Because of their anxiety, their mouths dried up. At last, they asked the king for permission to leave, but the king did not allow them to go. Finally, when they insisted on leaving, Śrī Jayadeva requested the king to give them sufficient wealth and let them depart. The king gave them varieties of clothing, jewels, and ornaments and let them depart. He also sent a few servants with the thieves so that

they could carry their luggage and leave them at their āśrama.

The king's guards took the thieves' luggage and began walking behind them. After awhile, they stopped somewhere and the royal guards sat on one side of the road while the thieves sat on the other. The guards asked the so-called devotees "My dear sirs, we have never before seen devotees like you. Many saintly persons visit our king, but we have never seen the way our king has served you and the way Śrī Jayadeva has respected you. Therefore we humbly request you to tell us about your relationship with Svāmī Jayadeva.

One of the so-called devotees replied, "This is very confidential. Still, I will reveal it to you, but do not disclose this to others. Previously, your Svāmījī, along with all of us, worked for the king. Once he committed a serious offence and so the king ordered us to kill him. But treating him as our friend, we did not kill him, but simply cut off his hands and legs. Because we showed him this mercy, Svāmījī respects us so much. We have received what we deserve for our good work."

After the ungrateful so-called devotees told this fabricated story, the earth split open and all of them fell into the crevice and vanished. Seeing this, the royal guards were highly astonished. They ran to Svāmī Jayadeva and explained to him everything that had happened. When Śrī Jayadeva heard the story, his body began to tremble, and being unhappy because of the thieves'

fate, he pressed his hands and legs. As a result, he immediately regained his lost hands and legs so that his body was just like before. Thereafter, the royal guards approached their king and narrated both shocking incidents to him.

Hearing that Śrī Jayadeva had regained his hands and legs, the king was exceedingly happy, as if he had gotten back his life. The king ran to Śrī Jayadeva and fell at his lotus feet. He said, "O lord, kindly reveal the confidential meaning of these two incidents. Why did the earth crack? Why did the saintly persons enter the crevice? How did you get back your hands and legs? I am very happy to see your lotus-like hands and legs."

When the king thus ardently requested Śrī Jayadeva to disclose the actual facts, he spoke as follows: "My dear King, the garb of a devotee is extremely valuable. It has great glory and meaning. No matter how people misbehave with saintly persons, they never retaliate. On the contrary, they always try to do good to even their enemies. The devotees are always engaged in working for the welfare of all living entities. Their hearts are filled with compassion. They are sober, kind, and filled with devotional sentiments. As sinful people do not give up their sinful nature, so the devotees never give up their honesty and kindness. One who understands this most important fact receives the favor of saintly persons and the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

Finally, understanding the actual identity and glories of Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī, the king felt

satisfied. He said, “Kindly stay here, for my life is dedicated to your service. Simply by your presence, my life has become successful. Because of you, my entire kingdom has become filled with love and devotion for the Supreme Lord.”

On the order of Śrī Jayadeva, the king sent some of his men to the village of Kenduvilva and brought his, Padmāvati. Padmāvati thereafter resided with the queen. One day, when she was sitting with the queen, a messenger came and informed the king that the queen’s brother had died, and that his wife had ascended his funeral pyre. Hearing this, the queen was greatly shocked, but then she appreciated how greatly chaste her sister-in-law was.

Padmāvati was not at all surprised after hearing of this incident. She said to the queen, “Although entering the funeral pyre along with the dead body of a woman’s husband is indicative of chastity, it is not the symptom of love and affection. Rather, by thinking of one’s worshipable object in separation, one should strengthen and nourish his love for his beloved. Ending one’s life is just the opposite of love in separation. If you ask about the symptom of pure love, the answer is that when one’s beloved leaves his body, the lover’s life should also simultaneously depart.”

Thus Padmāvati did not praise the act of the queen’s sister-in-law. In response, the queen joked by saying, “I have never heard of such an example of chastity as you have described. Maybe you are the only example

of it.” Later, the queen explained everything to the king and said, “Take Svāmī to the garden for some time. In that way I will see how much love Padmāvati has for her husband.”

The king tried to pacify the queen, saying, “This is not at all a good idea. Why do you want to test her? Do you want to kill me?” When the queen did not give up her request, the king finally relented and obeyed her command. When Svāmijī went to the garden with the king, a maidservant of the queen, as previously arranged, came and told Padmāvati that her husband had gone to the abode of the Lord. After hearing this, the queen and the other palace ladies pretended to express their grief and sorrow. Padmāvati, who was a great Vaiṣṇavī, understood in her meditation the actual fact and so she said, “O Queen, my husband is well and fine. Nothing has happened to him. Why are you creating this illusion?”

The queen’s trick had no effect on Padmāvati. The real truth was exposed and thus the queen felt ashamed. After some days, the queen again created an illusion. Padmāvati understood that the king was a truthful devotee, but that his wife wanted to test her and so it was best to play along. So the next time, when a maidservant came and said, “Oh, Svāmijī has left this world!” immediately, being filled with love for her husband, Padmāvati gave up her life. Seeing her dead body, the queen became pale and morose. The king arrived and when he heard everything, he said, “My intelligence has

become polluted by the association of this lady and so it is better for me to burn my body to ashes.”

When the king had arranged for his funeral pyre, Śrī Jayadeva came running to that spot, where he saw Padmāvatī's dead body and the king preparing to die. The King said, “I am responsible for her death.” Śrī Jayadeva replied, “But you cannot bring her back to life by ending your life. Therefore you should not enter the fire.”

The King said, “O Mahārāja, I should die. I cannot live any longer because I have failed to follow your instructions.” Śrī Jayadeva pacified the king in various ways, but the ruler's mind remained fixed. Śrī Jayadeva then began singing the prayers of *Gīta-govinda* and very soon, by the influence of that transcendental sound, Padmāvatī regained her life. The king felt embarrassed and still wanted to end his life. He thought, “Even though I had the opportunity to associate with such a saintly person as Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī, I haven't a tinge of devotion for him. Therefore my life is condemned.” Still, Śrī Jayadeva managed to pacify the king and thereafter, he returned to his village, Kenduvilva. The commentator admits that he has simply written whatever he had heard from the devotees.

The Gaṅgā flows thirty-six miles from the āśrama of Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī, but still he would take bath in that river every day. That was his custom. When he became very old, he did not stop his custom of going to the Gaṅgā to bathe. Seeing his attachment and devotion

for her, and to give him satisfaction, Gaṅgā-devī appeared to Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī in a dream and said, “Now you are old and so you don't have to come so far to take your bath. Simply meditate on me and take your bath within your mind. Do not force yourself to go to the Gaṅgā and bathe.”

Still, Śrī Jayadeva did not heed her advice and so again Gaṅgā-devī appeared to him in a dream and said, “If you don't wish to take my advice then I will personally come in the pond which is situated next to your *āśrama*.” Śrī Jayadeva said, “How will I believe that you have actually entered that pond?” Gaṅgā-devī said, “When you see fully blossomed lotus flowers in that pond near your āśrama, you should understand that the Gaṅgā has come.”

That actually came to pass, and when Śrī Jayadeva saw the lotus flowers in the pond he began taking his bath there every day. Even today people go there and take bath in that pond, which is known as Jayadeva Gaṅgā. After leaving this world, Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī went back to the spiritual world.

❀ Text 45 ❀

Śrīdhara Swāmī firmly established the supreme religious principles taught by Vedavyāsa and Śukadeva Gosvāmī in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Not knowing the actual intention of the *karma*, *jñāna*, and *upāsana* sections of the *Vedas*, some learned scholars combine them and present this as the

purport of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The fruitive workers and dry speculators imagined a meaning opposed to the real meaning of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. As a result, inquisitive devotees were often baffled, having failed to understand the actual purport of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. In such a situation, Śrīdhara Swāmī composed his famous commentary on the *Paramahansa-saṁhitā*, or Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, called *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*. His commentary is accepted as the most authoritative commentary by all classes of learned scholars. In his commentary, Śrīdhara Swāmī established the actual conclusion of the six branches of scriptures and the six philosophies. It is absolutely in accord with all the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*. By the mercy of Śrīdhara Swāmī's spiritual master, Śrī Paramānanda Sarasvatī, Lord Bindu-mādhava personally edited Śrīdhara Swāmī's commentary with His own hands.

❀ Commentary ❀

Many learned devotees and scholars during the time of Śrīdhara Swāmī, being overly proud, considered their own commentaries to be better than his, or at least on a par with his. One day, they all assembled at Kāśīpurī to discuss which commentary was the best. It was decided that the poet whose commentary was accepted as the best would receive a written declaration of his victory. At that time a great debate took place and no unanimous conclusion was reached. Finally, all the learned scholars agreed that

they should accept the opinion of the Deity, Lord Bindu-mādhava.

For this purpose, they decided to keep all of their commentaries in the temple, thinking that by doing so, they would come to understand which was best. Thus they placed all of their commentaries inside the temple. Some time thereafter, when the temple door was opened, everyone saw that the Lord had personally edited and corrected the commentary by Śrīdhara Swāmī known as *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*. From that time onwards, everyone accepted his commentary as the best and began studying it. They followed the supreme religious principles described in this commentary so that their lives became successful.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrīdhara Swāmī was born in South India. After his mother left this world and his father took *sannyāsa* in his childhood, he tended his cows and buffaloes. People used to refer to him as foolish and illiterate. Then, by receiving the mercy of his spiritual master, Śrī Paramānanda Sarasvatī, he pleased his worshipable Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva. From Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva he received the benediction that he would be expert in explaining the *Vedas*, the branches of the *Vedas*, and the *Purāṇas*, and that he would be a foremost devotee, endowed with exceptional loving devotional service. After the death of his wife, Śrīdhara Swāmī became entangled because of his affection for his newborn child.

One day, by the arrangement of the Lord, an incident occurred which opened his eyes. An egg suddenly fell in front of him, from the egg emerged a baby bird, and immediately, by the arrangement of Providence, a number of insects came and the baby bird ate them. Actually, it is the Supreme Lord who maintains all moving and non-moving living entities. Everyone receives whatever one is destined to receive. Thinking like this, Śrīdhara Swāmī left home and took *sannyāsa*.

Once when Śrīdhara Swāmī became very ill, Lord Bindu-mādhava personally served him in the form of one of his students, named Mādhava. The Supreme Lord personally supplies the paraphernalia needed to serve the devotees. According to Śrīdhara Swāmī's instructions, even if a person performs severe penance, visits holy places, studies the *Vedas*, performs sacrifices, or explains the scriptures, without surrendering fully unto the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, he cannot be delivered from the ocean of material existence.

❀ Text 46 ❀

Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura, a genuine recipient of Lord Kṛṣṇa's mercy, was a form of auspiciousness for the people of the world. It was as if Auspicious personified had appeared in this world as Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura. He composed a beautiful literature, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta. The statements of this

book are all newly composed, and not a repetition of the statements of other poets. In this book he has spontaneously described transcendental love and devotion unto the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta is the life and soul of the pure devotees. Indeed, they wear the glorious necklace of this work within their hearts.

Once, when Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura, who was blind, was walking on a street in Vṛṇḍāvana, Lord Kṛṣṇa personally took his hand and showed him the way and then left him. Śrī Bilvamaṅgala said to his worshipable Lord, "You may go from the clasp of my hand, but I will consider You to be a true hero if You can leave my heart." Having received inspiration from Cintāmaṇī, he has beautifully described Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with the *gopīs* of Vraja. His presence was most auspicious and beneficial for the devotees.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura lived in a village on the shore of the sacred river, Kṛṣṇavenā, in South India. He was born in a *brāhmaṇa* family and was very grave and fixed in devotion to the Lord. And yet, he somehow became attached to a prostitute named Cintāmaṇī. Indeed, he was completely enamored with her and could think of nothing else. As a result, his mind became exceedingly restless so that he gradually abandoned all proper social etiquette. His

heart was filled with longing for that woman so that he abandoned all of his devotional activities and spent the days and nights in her association.

Once, on the disappearance day of his father, Śrī Rāmadāsa, he forced himself to remain at home for some time. But in the evening, he set out for the house of the prostitute, which was situated on the other side of the river. On that day there was heavy rainfall and so the water level of the river became very high and the currents very fast. Ineed, it was practically a flood, and there was no boat to cross the river. Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura could not wait, because he was feeling intense separation from his beloved. Indeed, it was impossible for him to remain alive without her association.

Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura thought, “If I jump in the river to cross it, I will drown because the water is raging, and if I don’t see Cintāmaṇī, I will die in separation from her. To die in the waves of the river in search of my beloved is better than to die a broken-hearted man. After all, it is possible that I will not drown, but reach the other side of the river.”

Thinking like this, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura jumped into the river. He was so absorbed in thought of Cintāmaṇī that he completely forgot about his own self. He was only thinking of how he could meet her. As he was swimming in the river, he gradually became tired and his destination was still far away. Then as he was about to sink into the water, he saw something floating nearby.

It was actually the dead body of a chaste woman, but he thought it to be a piece of wood and so grabbed it with both hands. Eventually, with the help of the dead body, he reached the other side of the river and then quickly ran to the house of Cintāmaṇī. However, because it was late at night, the door was locked.

Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura found a large snake hanging from the roof and touching the ground. He was so much absorbed in thought of his beloved that he considered the snake to be a rope, and with its help he climbed onto the roof. And yet, the door on the roof was also locked and so Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura, finding no other way to enter the house, jumped from the roof into the courtyard. The sound of his jumping woke Cintāmaṇī up. After lighting a lamp, she saw that Bilvamaṅgala had come.

Cintāmaṇī could not believe her eyes. She said, “Your name is Bilvamaṅgala, but you are very *amaṅgala*, or inauspicious. How have you come here at this time and in this terrible weather?”

Bilvamaṅgala’s body was covered with mud and so she bathed him and gave him dry clothes. Later on, she asked, “Can you tell me how you crossed the river, and how you climbed onto the roof?”

Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura said, “You sent me a boat to cross the river, and you hung a rope for me to climb onto the rooftop. I was very happy to see your arrangements, for I could understand your strong attachment and love for me. Why are you asking me all

these questions?”

Hearing this, Cintāmaṇi thought that he was sweet-talking her and so went out to see for herself. She went onto the roof and saw that a deadly poisonous snake was hanging there. Cintāmaṇi felt disgusted with Bilvamaṅgala and chastised him, saying, “Just as you have fixed your mind on my body, which is a bag of bones, flesh, blood, and stool, if you had fixed your mind on the lotus feet of Lord Śyāmasundara, I would have considered you to be an intelligent person. Attachment for perishable objects leads only to misery, both in this world and the next. Therefore, beginning tomorrow morning, I will simply worship the lotus feet of the Divine Couple. What you do is your own business. If you wish, you can heed my words and also engage in the worship of the Lord.”

By this chastisement, and by other instructions of Cintāmaṇi, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura came to his senses. He too developed a desire to relish the nectrean beauty of the indestructible Lord Kṛṣṇa, instead of the temporary beauty of a woman manifested in the material world. He had a complete change of heart, and he felt great enthusiasm all over his body. The lives of both of them had irrevocably changed.

Cintāmaṇi picked up a stringed instrument and Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura picked up a *mṛdaṅga*, and in their ecstatic mood they roamed through the groves of Vṛndāvana within their minds, singing about the transcendently sweet pastimes of Śrī

Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Thus they became fully absorbed in the service of the Lord, and they felt a transcendental joy which surpassed that experienced during millions of worldly enjoyments. They passed the entire night singing the glories of Lord Hari, and the next morning, according to plan, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura left for the āśrama of his spiritual master and Cintāmaṇi left for Haridvāra. Both of them engaged in chanting the holy names of the Lord and meditating upon His transcendental forms.

Thereafter, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura accepted Śrī Somagiri as his initiating spiritual master. Who can describe the loving sentiments of Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura? He saw the presence of Lord Kṛṣṇa everywhere. In his vision, the entire world was a place for the Lord’s pastimes.

Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura remained in the service of his spiritual master for one year while churning the ocean of devotional service to produce the nectar of love of God. He studied many devotional literatures and composed newer and newer verses out of ecstatic love.

Finally he developed an intense desire to visit Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma. He thought, “When will that day come when I will be able to have the *darśana* of Śrī Vṛndāvana?” One day, he started for Vṛndāvana, and on the way he stopped at a particularly pleasant place. There was a calm lake there and Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura sat on the shore. He was so deeply absorbed in love for Kṛṣṇa that he did not even look at other people.

Soon the people of the village came to know of his exalted loving characteristics.

Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura happened to see a lady taking bath in the lake, and by the arrangement of the Providence, he intently stared at her. When she completed her bath and started to go home, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura followed her out of attachment. At that time he forgot that he had abandoned all kinds of material happiness and had accepted the renounced order of life. Eventually that lady entered her house and Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura remained standing at her doorstep. Because of attachment, his heart was burning and his body had become weak.

When the lady's husband came outside, he saw a saintly person standing at the door. The husband was also a great devotee. He went inside and asked his wife, "Why is that devotee standing outside? Why didn't you greet him and give him some alms?"

The lady explained everything to her husband, who then went outside and respectfully invited Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura to come inside the house. He said, "Please come inside. Kindly place your lotus feet in our house so that it will be sanctified. I will wash your lotus feet and sprinkle the water on my head. This is my heartfelt desire."

Although he was pained by these words, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura went inside the house. That it is the duty of householders to serve devotees in all respects was demonstrated by this devotee. He said to his

wife, "Decorate yourself nicely and serve this devotee. By pleasing him with service you will very quickly attain good fortune and the mercy of the Supreme Lord."

Carrying out the order of her husband, the woman dressed herself nicely and, placing some *mahā-prasāda* of the Lord on a plate, offered it to Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura, who had been taken into a well-furnished room on the upper floor of the house. As she respectfully stood before him with folded hands, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura controlled his mind in consideration of her chastity, and her being a staunch devotee. He condemned himself for his lusty thoughts, especially since he wore the dress of a renunciate. By carefully considering the matter, all insignificant material desires vanished from his mind. At the same time, he repented, thinking that it was his eyes that had caused him to be attracted to the beautiful form of the woman.

Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura said, "O Devī, please give me the needles in your hair." When she handed him the needles, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura pierced his eyes with them. The woman became emotionally overwhelmed by the sight of this shocking act. While taking deep breaths, she was unable to say anything. Then, feeling great distress, she went and told her husband about what had happened. He rushed to the spot, and feeling great distress, he fell at the feet of Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura.

The devotee prayed to Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura with foled hands: "O lord, we have

committed a grave offence because we have caused distress to a devotee.”

Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura said, “Alas! You are the real devotee. I am only an imitation devotee, and actually, I am a non-devotee.”

The householder said, “Kindly stay in my house so that we can serve you.” Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura replied, “You have served me in such a way that nobody has done before. I have not seen such a service attitude anywhere else. Indeed, my heart has become satisfied by your service.”

After saying this, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura set out for Vṛndāvana. He had destroyed his eyes, which to him were as troublesome as a ghost. Now the eyes of his heart opened so that detachment and knowledge came of their own accord. On the way, he passed through a jungle where he sat for awhile. The Supreme Lord appeared before him and gave him some *prasāda*. The Lord said, “Now the day is almost over and so you should stay underneath a tree and rest.”

The Supreme Lord personally held Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura’s hand and led him underneath a large tree. After making him sit down, the Lord wanted to go, but Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura did not let Him go. He felt the Lord’s touch to be exceedingly pleasant. The more the Lord wanted to free His hands, the more tightly Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura grabbed hold of them. Finally the Lord freed His hands and was about to go. At this, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura said, “You may forcibly free Yourself from my

grip, but I will consider You to be the most powerful personality if You can depart from my heart.”

Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura firmly held Śrī Kṛṣṇa within his heart. Visualizing many pastimes of the Supreme Lord in this way, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura finally arrived at Śrī Vṛndāvana. His only intension was to drink the nectrean mellows tasted by the residents of Vṛndāvana. All material pleasures appeared stale to him. Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura had an intense hankering for the *darśana* of the Lord. Being attracted by Bilvamaṅgala’s unallowed devotional service, the Lord of Vṛndāvana appeared before Him and played His flute. Thus Lord Kṛṣṇa fulfills all the desires of His devotees.

Just as lotus flowers begin to bloom when the sun rises, so when he heard the transcendently sweet sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura’s internal senses awakened, and his desire to relish the beauty of the Lord increased manifold. He was always overwhelmed by love of God while repeatedly hearing the sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute.

Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura understood and admitted that this rare achievement was due to the influence of Cintāmaṇi. That is why in the *maṅgalācaraṇa* of his book, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-karnāmṛta, he first glorified Cintāmaṇi. He composed this literature, which is an ocean of the sublime mellows of love of God. Simply by reading, explaining, and meditating upon this book, all of one’s doubts and ignorance, which are like knots in the

heart, are cut asunder. By this practice, one becomes eligible to re-establish his forgotten relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa in *mādhurya-rasa* so that his path to the attainment of the direct service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa becomes clear.

When Cintāmaṇi learned that Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura has gone to Vṛndāvana and had attained Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *darśana*, she was highly astonished. While remembering her past relationship with him, she also set out for Vṛndāvana. When he understood that she had come to him, Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura stood up and respectfully greeted her, considering her to be his spiritual master. He then offered her a cup of sweet rice.

Cintāmaṇi asked, "Where did you get this." Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura replied, "The Supreme Lord, considering me to be His humble servant, sends this *prasāda* for me every day." Cintāmaṇi asked, "How can I accept this, for the Lord has given it to you. I will accept the *prasāda* personally given by the Lord's hand if He mercifully offers it to me."

Having decided this, both devotees sat in a calm surrounding. Neither accepted the *prasāda*. Finally, seeing their firm determination in ecstatic love, Lord Kṛṣṇa became pleased and personally brought a leaf cup filled with sweet rice and gave it to Cintāmaṇi. Both devotees had the *darśana* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and then honored Their *mahā-prasāda*.

Śrī Viṣṇu Purī presented a great treasure of devotional service for the benefit of the conditioned souls of Kalī-yuga. He accepted Vaiṣṇava-dharma as the highest *dharma*, considering all other *dharmas* as subordinate to it. He rejected all the unauthorized religious systems, and did not even give them token praise. Just as a golden line shines brightly next to a brass line, Śrī Viṣṇu Purī saw Vaiṣṇava-dharma as embodying the true religious principles, and he saw all others as insignificant. He declared that the association of devotees is the fruit of the creeper of Kṛṣṇa's mercy. He collected the essence of all the literatures in existence and compiled a book called *Bhakti-ratnāvalī*, containing thirteen chapters. He collected the jewel-like verses from the ocean-like Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and produced this sublime literature.

One day, as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was sitting at Jagannātha Purī, surrounded by many exalted devotees, one of them said, "Śrī Viṣṇu Purī is residing at Kāśī. From this it is understood that he has a strong desire to attain liberation. He considers liberation to be superior to devotional service."

In reply, Śrī Mahāprabhu explained that such an intention was never present in Śrī Viṣṇu Purī's mind. Rather, he accepted liberation as insignificant in front of devotional service. In order to prove this, Śrī Mahāprabhu wrote a letter to Viṣṇu Purī: "Kindly send a garland of jewels for

me. I would like this very much.” Receiving the letter, Śrī Viṣṇu Purī understood the intention of Śrī Mahāprabhu and compiled a literature named *Bhakti-ratnābalī* by carefully collecting many jewel-like verses from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam glorifying devotional service. He then sent the book to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu at Jagannātha Purī. This literature clearly established devotional service on the topmost platform, and liberation has been totally uprooted and thrown away as insignificant.

❀ **Text 48** ❀

Śrī Jñānadeva belonged to the Śrī Viṣṇu Svāmī *sampradāya* and was a learned scholar of very grave disposition. He had two disciples named Śrī Nāmadeva and Śrī Trilocana, who were just like a sun and moon that illuminated the world of devotees. His words are as sanctified as the water of the Gaṅgā. His literatures, such as his commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, were like a mine of the jewels of love of God. He had been empowered by the previous ācārayas of Lord Hari. The renowned Śrī Vallabhācārya, who had worshiped the Lord according to the procedure followed by King Pṛthu, belonged to this *sampradāya*. Śrī Jñānadeva accepted the nine kinds of devotional service as the only means of success and thus engaged in the service of the Supreme Lord with firm determination. He dedicated all the activities of his mind,

speech, and senses to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord.

❀ **Commentary** ❀

Now hear about Śrī Jñānadeva, who belonged to Śrī Viṣṇu Svāmī's *sampradāya*, and who was known to be exceedingly intelligent. When his father left family life and took *sannyāsa*, he had lied to his spiritual master, saying, “I have no wife and so I would like you to initiate me into the renounced order of life.” Later on, when his wife heard about this, she approached his spiritual master and told him everything truthfully. Thus the spiritual master understood that his disciple had told a lie so that he could accept the renounced order of life. His wife said, “My lord, kindly speak to him in such a way that he will return home with me.” In this way, she brought her husband home. As a result of this incident, all of the father's relatives were displeased and so they ostracized him from their society and caste. Although from that time onwards he began to live separately from society, he did not feel distressed because he had re-entered household life by the order of his spiritual master.

After he had given up the *sannyāsa-āśrama* and returned home, Śrī Jñānadeva had three sons and Śrī Jñānadeva was the eldest. Śrī Jñānadeva had pure love and devotion for the Lord. When he attended the *gurukula*, nobody agreed to teach him the *Vedas*. They said, “Since you are a son of a *sannyāsī*, you

have lost your caste.”

An assembly of learned *brāhmaṇas* was called, and in that assembly Śrī Jñānadeva asked this question: “According to your understanding, may I study the *Vedas* or not?” The learned scholars replied, “Your *brāhminical* qualifications are lost and so you have no right to study the *Vedas*.” Hearing this, Śrī Jñānadeva spoke while looking at a buffalo that was standing nearby: “Even this buffalo can study without a teacher.”

Śrī Jñānadeva gave the order, and immediately the buffalo began reciting the *Vedas*. In this way Śrī Jñānadeva showed the power of devotional service, and as a result, those *brāhmaṇas* also became attracted to the life of a devotee. Their pride destroyed, they fell down at the feet of Śrī Jñānadeva and spoke with great humility. Their mentality was changed by seeing the non-duplicitous nature of a devotee.

Jñānadeva had two leading disciples, Śrī Nāmadeva and Śrī Trilocana. They were like the sun and moon, for they removed the darkness of ignorance by preaching to the devotees. The characteristics of Śrī Nāmadeva have already been described in this book. Now hear about the character of Śrī Trilocana, who was filled with love and devotion.

The exalted devotee Śrī Trilocana appeared in a *vaiśya* family, but instead of observing his family traditions, he served the devotees, who all belong to the family of the Supreme Lord. However, he was not able to serve the devotees to his satisfaction

because there was only his wife to help him at home. Thus he had a desire to employ a servant who would understand the moods of saintly persons and render service to them accordingly. He thought, “I am eternally a servant of the Lord’s servants, but what can I do? I don’t find a suitable servant.”

One day, to fulfill the desire of His devotee, the Lord Himself took the form of a servant and arrived at Śrī Trilocana’s door. The Lord had only a torn blanket on His body and broken shoes on His feet. Śrī Trilocana saw Him outside his house and asked, “Where have you come from? It appears that you have no parents at home.”

The Supreme Lord in the form of a servant replied, “What you have said is true. I have no father and mother.” Śrī Trilocana asked, “Will you work for me? I need a servant to serve saintly persons.” The Lord answered, “If My master’s nature matches My nature, then I am happy to take up the work.” Śrī Trilocana asked, “Why would another’s nature not match Your nature? Tell me clearly about this.” The Lord replied, “Every day I eat five or six kilos of rice. Because of this, people become upset with Me and will not hire Me.”

The servant further declared, “I know the principles of the four *varṇas*. I carry out all allotted work perfectly. In my work I do not require help from anyone. As far as serving the devotees is concerned, I have been doing that for My whole life. This is not a new service for Me. My name is Antaryāmī. I agree to become your servant.”

The devotee Śrī Trilocana said, “You can eat as much as you want. Do not feel shy about eating.” Saying this, Śrī Trilocana gave Antaryāmī a pair of new shoes and a new blanket, and bathed Him very thoroughly. Trilocana then said to his wife, “Keep this Antaryāmī as your servant and do not hesitate to feed him to His full satisfaction. Otherwise, He will run away and we will not get another servant like Him. Just give Him whatever He wants to eat. He will render service to the devotees every day, and you should serve Him every day. It is our duty to live together throughout our lives, serving the devotees and singing the glories of Lord Hari.”

Many saintly persons would daily gather at Śrī Trilocana’s house. Serving the saintly persons was a coveted desire of Antaryāmī’s. According to the devotees’ desires, Antaryāmī would serve them by massaging their feet and caring for them nicely. In this way about thirteen months passed and then there was a slight disagreement about food and Antaryāmī suddenly disappeared.

One day some time before this, as Śrī Trilocana’s wife visited one of her neighbors, that lady asked her why she was becoming weak and morose. Śrī Trilocana’s wife smilingly replied, “What can I do? My husband had brought a servant from somewhere, but there was a problem that even after eating so much food, He was not satisfied. Therefore I had to cook more and more and because of this, I became weak. Please do not tell this to anyone. Just keep

it to yourself. If He comes to know this, He will immediately leave.”

Antaryāmī was actually the real *antaryāmī*, or Supersoul, and so he heard this and immediately left Trilocana’s house. This was the condition that He had stipulated while being hired. Śrī Trilocana was exceedingly unhappy after this incident. He became practically lifeless, like a fish out of water.

After Antaryāmī left, Śrī Trilocana did not eat or drink anything for three days. He felt very sad when he said to his wife, “Alas! Where will I find another intelligent servant? You are very unfortunate! Why did you speak like that? He was very fond of serving the devotees. Now what can I do to bring Him back?”

While Śrī Trilocana was lamenting like this, a voice from the sky spoke: “Take your food, and also drink something. I am very pleased with your service mentality towards the devotees, and that is why I had rendered service to the devotees as your servant. I am actually your servant because I am controlled by your devotion. I eternally reside in your house. If you want then I can return and serve while staying in your house.”

When he heard this voice from the sky, Śrī Trilocana understood the mystery and felt even unhappier. He lamented, “Shame on me! I treated the Supreme Lord as my servant. I could not act as His servant, and although He stayed here, I did not offer Him any service. This is most shameful behavior! I can no longer show my face to the devotees. People call me a devotee, but what service

have I rendered to the Supreme Lord? I was so foolish that I could not even recognize Him. He has such an affectionate attitude towards the devotees, and yet I could not even recognize Him. The Lord overlooked all my defects. He is so affectionate toward His devotee that He simply looked at my good qualities and ignored my faults. He came to my house and stayed for so long, and yet I am so foolish that I could not recognize Him. If He ever returns, I will fall down at His lotus feet.”

In this way Śrī Trilocana remained absorbed in thought of Antaryāmī. He had his meal and drank some water by the order of the Lord.

Śrī Vallabhācārya’s heart was the sitting place for the enchanting Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He would render service to the Lord in his mind so that his heart became filled with love and devotion. He was always eager to work for the benefit of the conditioned soul. He considered that by sharing devotional service to the Supreme Lord with the conditioned souls of the world, their lives would become successful. He illuminated the hearts of others with transcendental knowledge and devotion for the Supreme Lord. Thus the joy of the Lord’s service spread to each and every house and people became very happy.

Śrī Vallabhācārya was very fond of rendering service to Śrīnāthjī at Jatīpurā Govardhana. He never felt restless or bored while serving his worshipable Lord. He arranged to offer varieties of foodstuffs to

Lord Śrīnāthjī. People were very pleased to see the gorgeous arrangements he made for the Lord’s worship. Śrīnāthjī’s statement was that he was the perfect example of worshiping the Lord by following in the footsteps of King Pṛthu. Simply by seeing the worship performed by Śrī Vallabhācārya at Gokul, one’s mind becomes pacified.

Once, a very simple devotee went to Gokul for *darśana*. When he went to the pasturing grounds and saw a herd of cows and many cowherd boys, and when he witnessed the worship of Lord Bāla-kṛṣṇa in the temple, and the festive mood of the inhabitants of Gokul, he felt fully satisfied. The exchanges of love that he witnessed were unique. He hung the bag in which his worshipable Lord was kept on the branch of a tree and went to have the *darśana* of Śrī Vallabhācārya. He was happy to meet such a saintly person. Then, when he returned to where he had left his bag, he saw that it was not there. The devotee again went to Śrī Vallabhācārya and told him that his bag with the Lord could not be found. Seeing him depressed, Śrī Vallabhācārya said, “Go back and look again.”

The devotee went back and saw that there were many bags hanging on the tree branches. Totally bewildered, he quickly returned to the ācārya and said, “My lord, there are so many bags hanging on the tree.” The ācārya said, “You must know your own bag, and you worship your Lord every day, and still you cannot recognize which is yours?”

From this, the devotee understood that everything was arranged by the influence of Śrī Vallabhācārya, and thus his eyes expanded with amazement. He was now sure that the spiritual master could bring him to his worshipable Lord. He prayed to the ācārya, "Tell me the way by which I can recognize my Lord and obtain His association."

The ācārya replied, "You should love Him from the core of your heart. Serve Him with love and devotion. The way of devotional service is wonderful and sublime. Now go back and see that tree."

This time, when the devotee returned to the tree, he saw his worshipable Lord there and nothing else. He was so happy that he embraced the Lord to his heart. Tears filled his eyes. By the mercy of Śrī Vallabhācārya, he understood the glories of devotional service. From that time onwards, he engaged in the service of his Lord with his body, mind, and speech. His good fortune had no limit. To strengthen the *sādhakas'* faith and devotion by wonderful realizations was the customary practice of a devotee of the caliber of Śrī Vallabhācārya.

❀ Additional commentary ❀

Śrī Vallabhācārya was an incarnation of Vaiśvānara. He was born as the son of Śrī Lakṣmaṇa Bhaṭṭa and Ellamāgāru-devī in the seventh generation from a great Tailaṅga *brāhmaṇa* named Śrī Yajñanārāyaṇa, who was a descendent from Bhāradvāja, and who

resided in Kāṅkaḍabāḍa in South India. He was born on the Ekādaśī of the waning moon in the month of Vaiśākha in 1535 Śakābda era.

Once, his father, Śrī Lakṣmaṇa Bhaṭṭa, and his wife went to Kāśī to feed the *brāhmaṇas*. His wife was pregnant and on the journey she prematurely gave birth in her seventh month to a son under a *sami* tree in a forest named Campāraṇya. Finally they arrived at Kāśī, and they stayed at Lakṣmaṇa-ghāta. They named the young child Vallabha. He was awarded the sacred thread at the age of five, and completed his study of all the Vedic literatures at the age of thirteen. He studied the devotional literatures from various Vaiṣṇava *ācārayas*, such as Śrī Viṣṇu Citta.

Once, after he had established the devotional conclusions in a scriptural debate in the kingdom of Kṛṣṇadeva at Vijayanagara, he was presented with so many gifts, which he then distributed to all the learned scholars. He received many titles, including *jagadguru* and *ācārya*. At Vijayanagara, he was given initiation into the chanting of the eighteen-syllable Śrī Gopāl *mantra* by Śrī Bilvamaṅgalācārya (not Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura), who belonged to the Śrī Rūḍra *sampradāya*, and he was instructed in the conclusions propagated by Śrī Viṣṇu Svāmī. He was also ordered to preach the *anugraha-mārga* (or Puṣṭi-mārga) method of devotional service.

Having received the mercy of his spiritual master, Vallabha began traveling to the holy places of pilgrimage, and finally arrived at

Pāṇḍarapura. While he was there, Lord Śrī Paṇḍarīnātha ordered him to get married. Śrī Vallabhācārya asked the Lord to become his son so that his love for Him would increase, and therefore would not become enamored with material objects. He married Mahālakṣmī, the daughter of Śrī Devabhaṭṭa, from Kāśī. He resided at Cunārgaḍa, Prayāga, and other places before he went to settle at Gokul (Vraja). Thereafter he expanded the service of Śrīnāthajī at Yatīpurā (Govardhana). At present Śrīnāthajī is being worshiped at Nāthadvāra in Rajasthan.

In due course of time, Vallabha begot two sons, named Śrī Gopinātha and Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha. He wrote an *anubhāṣya* commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, and the Subodhinī commentary on the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He had sixty-four famous sitting places. Among his disciples were Śrī Paramānanda Dāsa, Śrī Sūra Dāsa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, and Śrī Kumbhana Dāsa. He recited Śrī Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa at Citrakūṭa. It is said that Lord Rāmacandra personally appeared and accepted his offering of bananas.

Realizing that the duration of life is short, Śrī Vallabhācārya asked his wife for permission to take *saṇnyāsa*. He could not get her permission, and then one day, his house became engulfed in flames. His wife said to him, "Quickly go out of the house." Accepting this as her permission for taking *saṇnyāsa*, Śrī Vallabhācārya accepted the renounced order of life (*tridaṇḍa saṇnyāsa*) from Śrī Nārāyaṇendra Tīrtha Svāmī, who

resided on the shore of the Gaṅgā. Thereafter he became known as Purnānanda. He had the highest regard for the service of the pure devotees. While residing at Śrī Hanumān-ghāṭa (Kāśī), he left this world while studying and reciting Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam after bathing in the Gaṅgā on the third day of the waxing moon in the month of Āṣāḍha in 1587 Samvat era, thus returning to Goloka-dhāma.

❀ **Text 49** ❀

It is a well-known fact which is confirmed by all saintly persons that in Kali-yuga one can obtain the shelter of the Supreme Lord only by executing devotional service. All the other processes are not conducive to attaining the Lord's mercy in Kali-yuga. There was once a saintly and devoted king named Kulaśekhara. When King Kulaśekhara heard during a recitation of the Rāmāyaṇa that Rāvaṇa had kidnapped Sītā, he became so angry that he hastily took out his sword and mounted his horse to kill the wicked demon. While shouting, "I will kill you," he jumped into the sea along with his horse. Seeing his staunch devotion, Lord Rāma and Sītā gave him Their *darśana* and saved him from drowning in the ocean.

There was another saintly person who imitated the pastimes of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva. He would dress himself to look like Lord Nṛsiṁha, and while killing Hiraṇyakaśipu, it appeared as if he actually killed the demon.

While playing the role of Daśaratha during a Rāma-līlā drama, that devotee gave up his body in separation from Lord Rāma when He was banished to the forest. There was a lady devotee named Ratīvantī. When she heard that mother Yaśodā had bound Kṛṣṇa with ropes, she left her body. By these incidents it is proven that in Kali-yuga, love and devotion for the Supreme Lord is of the utmost importance.

❀ Commentary ❀

The devotees of the Lord know perfectly well, and their characters bear witness to the fact that only by loving devotional service the Supreme Lord does spiritual advancement become manifest in Kali-yuga. Unfortunate and foolish are those persons who lack devotion for the Supreme Lord. King Kulaśekhara ruled the Keralā province in South India. He was very devoted to Lord Rāmacandra and so he would regularly hear narrations of His pastimes and transcendental qualities.

There was a *brāhmaṇa* who regularly recited Rāmāyaṇa to Kulaśekhara who understood that the king easily became highly emotional. One day, after hearing about Lord Rāma single-handedly fighting with Khara, the king mounted his horse and went about six miles to assist Him. Finally the devotees brought him back to his capital. Because of this, they would avoid discussing some of the pastimes, such as the kidnapping of Sītā.

One day, when that *brāhmaṇa* was ill, he

sent his son to continue the recitation of Rāmāyaṇa before the king. The young boy did not know about the nature of the king and so he recited the narration of the kidnapping of Sītā. When King Kulaśekhara heard the narration of this pastime, he felt as if Rāvaṇa was taking away Sītā right in front of his eyes, and so he felt searing pain within his heart. The king angrily unsheathed his sword and shouted, "Kill him! Kill him!" as he rode his horse into the forest. He was heading towards Laṅkā to attack Rāvaṇa, and so when he came to the ocean, he jumped in to cross it. His mood was "I will kill the wicked Rāvaṇa and bring back Sītā." His eyes were filled with tears as he meditated on the lotus feet of mother Sītā.

Seeing the king's devotional mood, Sītā and Rāmacandra appeared before him and said, "I have already killed Rāvaṇa. He has received his deserved result for his lowly act. Now you should return home." When King Kulaśekhara heard these words from Lord Rāmacandra, he became satisfied so that the pain in his heart vanished. He got back his life by the *darśana* of his worshipable Lord and thus returned to his capital.

Once, the devotees arranged for a drama on Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva's pastimes in Jagannātha Purī. In that play, the devotee who dressed himself as Nṛsiṃha became so absorbed in the mood of that Lord that he actually killed the person who was playing Hiraṇyakaśipu. There ensued a great commotion in the audience. Some people said that due to envy, he had killed that person just to take

revenge. Other people said that he killed that person because he was totally absorbed in the mood of Lord Nṛsimha.

To find out the truth of the matter, the people decided to arrange for a drama of Rāma-līlā and have that devotee play the part of King Daśaratha. Thus the play was rehearsed and the devotee acted as King Daśaratha. When Śrī Rāma was exiled to the forest, this devotee became so aggrieved due to separation from his son that while lamenting, he actually gave up his life.

There was a lady devotee named Śrī Rativantī, who was very attached to Kṛṣṇa's childhood form. She worshiped Kṛṣṇa daily with motherly affection and heard narrations of His childhood pastimes. One day, for some reason, she could not go to hear the discussion of the Lord's pastimes and so instead sent her son. When the son returned home, she asked, "Did you hear the narrations with attention and keep the messages in your heart? Tell me what you heard today?"

The son replied, "Today mother Yaśodā bound Kṛṣṇa with a rope around His waist and tied Him to a grinding mortar." As soon as she heard this, Śrī Rativantī became bewildered in ecstatic love. Empathizing with young Kṛṣṇa's distress, she displayed her love for the Lord by actually giving up her life.

❀ Text 50 ❀

According to the author, Śrī Nābhā, a king

of Jagannātha Purī cut off his right hand because he neglected the Lord's *mahā-prasāda* with it. What can I say about the glories of that devotee, the news of which spread across the land? From that severed hand appeared a rosemary tree whose flowers and leaves were very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Before Lord Jagannātha was offered opulent foodstuffs of fifty-six varieties, He was offered *khicaḍī* cooked by Karmabāi. This preparation was very dear to Lord Jagannātha so that even today it is offered to Him.

❀ Commentary ❀

After neglecting the Lord's *prasāda*, a king of Jagannātha Purī carefully deliberated over the matter and then cut off his hand. This incident is very briefly described by Śrī Nābhā and so I will try to elaborate on it.

One day, the king was playing a game of dice. While the game was in progress, a *pāṇḍā* of Lord Jagannātha brought some *prasāda* for the king. The king had the dice in his right hand, and his mind was totally absorbed in the play. Because he didn't want to divert his attention, he extended his left hand to accept the *prasāda*. At this, the *pāṇḍā* became unhappy, feeling that the *prasāda* had been disrespected. After finishing the game, the king got up and returned to the inner quarters of his palace. While there he heard that Lord Jagannātha's *prasāda* would no longer be sent to him because of his offence. The king admitted his fault and

stopped eating and drinking. He thought, “I should cut off my right hand because with it I neglected to respect the Lord’s *prasāda*. This seems to be a suitable punishment.”

The king called the *brāhmaṇas* and asked for their opinion, saying, “If someone disregards the Lord’s *prasāda*, as atonement should he be prepared to give up one of his bodily limbs, although it is certainly very dear?” The *brāhmaṇas* unanimously replied, “O King, for an offender, the best atonement is renunciation.”

The king thus decided to cut off his hand, but he wondered who could do this. Thinking like this, he remained silent while his mind was in turmoil. When the ministers saw the king in such a state of mind, they inquired about the cause, saying, “Is something bothering you? Are you experiencing some kind of distress? Please tell us so that we can find the means to give you relief.”

The King replied, “Every night I see a ghost in my sleep. He puts his hands through the window of my room and screams. I am very unhappy because of my fear of the ghost.”

One of the ministers advised, “Tonight I will sleep by your bed while you hide somewhere else. When the ghost pokes his hand through the window, I will cut it off with a sword.”

Hearing this, the king said, “This is a very good idea. We will do this.” That night, as the minister was on guard, the king got up from his bed and placed his hand through the window while shouting. The minister thought that the hand was that of the ghost

and so he cut it off with his sword. In this way the king intentionally punished himself, making a great sacrifice. When the minister saw that it was the king’s hand that was severed, he became alarmed and lamented in terrible anguish, saying, “I am a fool. What have I done?”

The king pacified the minister, saying, “You are faultless. I acted as the ghost because I had disrespected the Lord.” Seeing the king’s firm faith and devotion for *prasāda*, Lord Jagannātha instructed His *pāṇḍās*, “Quickly take My *prasāda* and go and give it to the king. Then take his severed hand and plant it in My garden.”

Carrying out the order of Lord Jagannātha, the *pāṇḍās* hurried to the king and gave him the *prasāda*. The king extended both hands to accept the Lord’s *prasāda*, and thus everyone was astonished that both hands were intact. The king accepted the Lord’s *prasāda* and touched it to his head and chest, feeling great joy while realizing the Lord’s mercy. The *pāṇḍās* planted the flower-like illusory severed hand of the king in the garden, and from it grew a rosemary tree. The flowers and leaves of that tree were then offered to Lord Jagannātha. The sweet aroma of these flowers make them very dear to the Lord.

❀ Śrī Karmābāi ❀

There was a lady devotee named Karmābāi who lived in Jagannātha Purī. She was not

perfect in her behavior according to the prescribed codes of conduct, but she had great affection for the Lord. Out of love, she would prepare *khichḍi* every morning and offer it to Lord Jagannātha. The Lord would personally appear to relish her *khichḍi* with great satisfaction. Indeed, her *khichḍi* was the tastiest of all the preparations cooked and offered to the Lord.

Karmābāi would also serve saintly persons every day. One day, a Vaiṣṇava came and saw her cooking *khichḍi* without having first bathed. The devotee considered this to be an offence. Feeling unhappy, he instructed Karmābāi to prepare *khichḍi* with purity by observing the rules and regulations found in the *karma-khāṇḍa* sections of the *Vedas*. The next day, Karmābāi prepared her *khichḍi* while following the procedures given by the devotee, but it became late for offering. As a result, while Lord Jagannātha was still eating her *khichḍi*, the temple *pāṇḍas* opened the curtain. The Lord thus had to quickly return to the temple without having washed His hands and mouth. Indeed, there were pieces of *khichḍi* seen by the *pāṇḍas* around His mouth.

The *pūjārīs* inquired, “O Lord, please tell us what has happened? Why are there some patches of *khichḍi* around Your mouth? Where did you go to eat it? We are astonished because this is the first time we have seen such a thing.”

Lord Jagannātha replied, “There is a female devotee named Karmā who offers Me *khichḍi* every morning. Having witnessed her

sincere devotion, I go to her house every day to eat *khichḍi*. Today one of My devotees went there and taught her the strict scriptural injunctions about external purity. There are so many procedures and opinions that can be considered regarding My worship. Not knowing this, when one forces a devotee by strong preaching to change the mode of worship that he is spontaneously attracted to, it is an injustice.”

The *pūjārīs* summoned that devotee and explained everything to him. They advised him to go to Karmābāi and strongly urge her to go back to preparing *khichḍi* in her own way. They stressed that he should assure her that this is the best thing for her.

The devotee went to Karmābāi and convinced her to prepare her offering as before. The devotee who visited her was afraid that he had committed an offence, and that the Lord must be displeased with him.

As long as Karmābāi was alive, she cooked and offered *khichḍi* to Lord Jagannātha. At the time of her disappearance, Lord Jagannātha cried. Since that time it has been the order of the king that *khichḍi* in the name of Karmābāi must be offered to Lord Jagannātha every morning before He is offered *cappanna-bhoga*.

❀ Śrī Silpille’s lady devotees ❀

Now hear about the two lady devotees of Lord Silpille. One of these lady

devotees was a princess, and the other was the daughter of a sweeper. One day their spiritual master came to their house. As he began worshiping his śālagrāma-śilā, the two ladies approached him and sat by his side. By seeing the Lord's worship, and by accepting *prasāda*, their desire to serve the Lord became more strongly manifest. They prayed to their spiritual master, "We would like to offer our service to beautiful Śyāmasundara and so kindly give us this śālagrāma-śilā."

Seeing that, although they were young, the girls had pure love for the Lord, the spiritual master gave them his śālagrāma-śilā and said, "The name of the Lord is Silpille. You should serve Him daily with great care and attention. You have acquired a desire to serve the Lord, and this is very auspicious and will lead you to liberation."

Thus, by the order of their spiritual master, both girls began worshiping the Lord so that soon they became very attached to rendering service to Him. The Lord in the form of the śālagrāma-śilā accepted their devotional service. It is the nature of the Supreme Lord, who is the most magnanimous personality, that if anyone worships Him with a pure and simple heart, He becomes very easily accessible.

Thus we have described how the two lady devotees achieved the Lord's service, and the purity of their devotion. Now hear attentively the stories of their lives. The lady devotee who was the daughter of a sweeper had two brothers that were inimical to one

another. Once, the brother with whom she was staying was attacked by the other brother. Indeed, the attacking brother's supporters beat up and plundered all the villagers. Everyone suffered very greatly. The brother who was attacked lost all his possessions, and the Deity belonging to the lady devotee was stolen. As a result, she felt terrible distress within her heart because she would be unable to go on living without rendering service to her worshipable Lord Silpille. Indeed, she stopped all eating and drinking.

Although people tried to pacify her, she was so aggrieved that she did not pay any attention to their words. Finally, people advised her, "For you, both brothers are equal. The brothers are inimical to one another, but both treat you respectfully. You should go to your brother and bring back your Deity. If you have faith and patience you will certainly regain your Lord."

Thereafter, the lady devotee went to the village where her other brother stayed. At that time her brother was sitting comfortably with apparently nothing to do. The lady devotee explained her distressed condition and begged for her worshipable Lord. The brother said, "Go inside that room and you will find that many Deities are present all together. If you can recognize your Deity, you can take Him."

Upon hearing this, one of the brother's friends teased the lady devotee, saying, "If you are so powerful then call your Lord from here. There is no need for you to go

inside the room and recognize your Lord.”

After hearing this, the lady devotee's eyes became moist due to excessive love and devotion for her Lord. At the same time, her heart was breaking because of separation from Him. She was already distressed, but she felt greater pain after hearing these taunting words. In great distress she called out to her Lord as if she were about to give up her life. Upon hearing her loving appeal, the Supreme Lord arrived there and embraced the lady devotee so that all of her distress was instantly removed. Indeed, she felt supremely fortunate, for she had achieved the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord.

The brother and some other pious persons said, “We are very fortunate that our devotee-sister has come to our house, and we are fortunate to see her ecstatic symptoms.” They also came to feel devotion for the Supreme Lord. Thereafter, the lady devotee took her Lord and returned home, feeling very happy.

Now hear about the young princess, who was also fully devoted to the Supreme Lord. Her mind, speech, and actions were all dedicated to the Lord, for she had no desire to enjoy worldly happiness. She was fully detached from the materialistic way of life. Her mind constantly remained absorbed in the service of Lord Silpille.

By the arrangement of Providence, the princess was married to a man who was godless, as were his family members. When her godless husband came to take her to his house after their marriage, she

was emotionally overwhelmed and began thinking about how to transform him so that he would become a devotee. Her family members duly bade her farewell. She was always in her unique devotional mood. She was alone, for there was no companion to accompany her to her in-laws' house. There was only one person to help her, and that was the Lord. On the journey, her husband came by her side and began speaking to her, but his suggestions were not at all to her liking. She became nervous and said, “Please do not come near me, for I am in distress.”

The husband of the young princess asked, “What are you suffering from? Please tell me so that I can quickly make some arrangement to give you relief. I had a great desire to meet you. I am also nervous and so kindly talk to me so that I can feel happy.”

The devotee girl replied, “If you wish to speak to me then first you have to manifest devotion for the Supreme Lord within your heart. Without devotion to the Lord, you will have to remain far from me. Do not touch my body.”

Hearing this, the husband became angry and thought, “She is always thinking of the bag in which her worshipable Lord, the paraphernalia for His worship, and the prayers for recitation, are kept. I should take that bag from her.”

Thinking like this, the man stole the bag and threw it into a river. As a result, the princess experienced an even greater distress which caused her heart to burn with grief. This was all due to separation from

her Lord. Trembling due to anger at her husband, the princess refused all food and drink. Although her husband tried to cheer her up, since her Lord, who was everything for her, was taken from her, she could not be pacified. Finally, when they arrived at his house, the husband narrated the entire story to the other family members.

Day by day, the princess' body became lean and weak. Seeing this, the family members asked her, "Why are you so stubborn?" Her mother-in-law tried to pacify her, and even tried to feed her with her own hands, but she refused to eat anything. What to speak of eating, she even refused to talk to her husband's family members. She had palpitations of the heart because of separation from the Supreme Lord as her condition worsened day by day. Finally, the in-laws said, "We fall down at your feet. Whatever you say, we will do." The young princess said, "Only if my Lord Silpille returns to me will I be able to continue living."

Thereafter, the princess, along with her in-laws, went to the shore of the river where the box had been thrown. However, while remembering her Lord, her head began to spin and she suddenly fell down unconscious to the ground. Tears flowed from her eyes as with great difficulty she called out to the Lord of her life, Śrī Silpille. Just as a lusty person remains under the control of lusty desires, Lord Śyāmasundara remains under the control of His devotee's love. As soon as He heard the princess' pathetic cries, Lord

Silpille came and embraced His devotee. The box also appeared before the princess.

When her husband, mother-in-law, father-in-law, and other family members saw this wonder, their minds became purified of all material contamination. They had no more doubt about the efficacy of devotion to the Lord. They realized that without devotion to the Lord, their lives were simply useless. In this way, the young devotee princess converted all of her family members into devotees of the Supreme Lord. From that time onward, they engaged in the service of the Supreme Lord and His devotees. They understood that the presence of their daughter-in-law would bring auspiciousness to their house.

❀ The two lady devotees ❀ who gave poison to their sons

Now I will narrate the story of the two lady devotees who gave poison to their sons for the sake of remaining in the association of a saintly devotee. There was a king who was a great devotee of the Lord, and so saintly persons would regularly visit his palace. The king would serve them to the best of his capacity. Once, an exalted devotee arrived at the king's palace, along with his associates. The king had complete faith in this devotee, and was attracted to having his good association. Indeed, every time the devotee would try to leave, the king would plead with him in various ways to stop him

from going. He would say, "Please stay here today, you may go tomorrow morning."

In this way, about a year and a few months passed. Finally, the saintly person decided that he would leave the next morning without fail, and he would not remain no matter how hard the king tried to stop him. Knowing this, the king lost all hope of keeping the saintly devotee in his palace. Indeed, he became so emotionally overwhelmed that his body appeared to wither. The queen inquired about this and came to understand that without the association of that saintly person, her husband would not be able to continue living.

Understanding that she might lose her husband, the queen poisoned her son. She was very attached to her husband, and her husband would continue to live only if the saintly person would stay with him. Saintly persons are naturally independent. Who can stop them if they want to do something?

In the early morning, the queen began loudly crying so that her maidservant also began to cry. The news of the death of the young prince soon spread throughout the palace so that there was a great commotion. When the saintly person received the news, he untied his waistband just as he was preparing to leave. That great soul entered the inner chambers and saw the young prince lying dead, his body having turned blue due to poison. The saintly person said to the queen, "Tell me the truth. Why have you done this?" The queen replied, "I knew that you would definitely leave our palace

today, and we have a strong desire to keep you here. To stop you from going, I adopted this means."

Seeing the wonderful devotion of the king and queen, the saintly person began to cry while beating his chest. He said, "You have given poison to your dear son just to stop me from going? What love and devotion!" He was practically speechless, and his voice was choked. He felt overwhelming joy to witness such loving devotion. It is very difficult to understand the true nature of devotional service. When one develops love and devotion for the Supreme Lord, his body is to be considered as transcendental. Such a person no longer sees anyone as superior or inferior. One should give up the mentality of distinguishing between high castes and low castes, and one should always maintain devotional sentiments within his heart.

The king was from a lower caste of *kṣatriyas*. The saintly person did not think of the king in that way. Thereafter, that exalted devotee described the qualities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and revived the dead prince. He now found that place to be quite pleasing. Among his associates, he allowed those who wanted to go to depart, and the others remained with him and engaged in devotional service. After this incident, that saintly person declared, "Now, even if you try to drive me away, I will not leave!"

Now hear attentively as I describe the other lady devotee, whose name was *Sītā-devī*. This narration is very pleasing to hear. By hearing it, we learn that for as long as we live

in this world, we must associate with saintly persons. The king of Mahārāṣṭra, named Rājī, was a great devotee. His daughter, Sītā-devī, was married to Rāmarāi, who was the king of Kāṇdhāra. However, when she went to the palace of her husband, she found that all of the family members were averse to God. They never participated in any of the activities of devotional service to the Supreme Lord. What to speak of serving the devotees, they never even talked about devotees in their palace.

The body of Sītā-devī had been nourished by the *prasāda* given to her by the devotees at her father's palace. She had the *darśana* of many devotees there. Her tongue relished the *caraṇāmṛta* that washed the devotees' feet. After marriage, the princess became anxious because she was born and brought up in a devotional atmosphere. How could she be happy now in the midst of godless people? Indeed, she became quite depressed, as if there were no hope. Finding no other alternative, she one day said to one of her maidservants, "Whenever a dear devotee of the Supreme Lord comes to this city, please inform me."

In order to convert her godless family members, Sītā-devī resolved to poison her son whenever an exalted devotee would arrive at the city. One day, by the arrangement of Providence, a host of saintly persons, headed by Śrī Jñānadeva, arrived at the city. The maidservant informed the princess of this. Sītā-devī became impatient to see the devotees. Because of her devotion

for saintly persons, she gave poison to her son. When the young boy died, the princess and other family members began to cry and piteously lament. Indeed, they were beating their chests and falling to the floor. Their hearts were breaking due to intense grief.

The lady devotee appealed to all of the family members: "There is a way to bring this dead boy back to life. If we can do that, then he will certainly rise up again. My father has successfully tried this procedure."

The grief-stricken family members replied, "Whatever you say, we will do." The princess said, "Go and invite all the saintly devotees who have come to this city." The family members asked, "What do these devotees look like?" The princess replied, "My maidservant had previously seen many saintly persons in my father's house. She knows what they look like and where they can be found." When asked, the maidservant informed everyone that this very day some saintly devotees had come to the city and were staying at such-and-such place. The maidservant then led the king to the saintly persons, and she also taught him how to behave with them.

The maidservant said, "When you see the devotees, you should fall onto the ground to offer obeisances while catching hold of their feet." The king actually did this. Due to intense grief, tears were gliding from his eyes. The king prayed to the devotees, "O lords, please visit our house just to purify it." Accepting the king's request, the devotees cheerfully went to his palace.

The maidservant returned to the palace before the king and informed the princess of the imminent arrival of some saintly devotees. The princess came out of the palace and stood near the gate in order to greet them. When the devotees arrived, she fell down at their feet. Her voice choked up and tears filling her eyes, she gently said, "You all know my parents because they are very fond of serving the Vaiṣṇavas. Indeed, they are great devotees. Today my happiness knows no bound. Having seen your lotus feet today, I feel like sacrificing my life at your lotus feet."

The saintly devotees were exceedingly satisfied, seeing the lady devotee's devotion. They said, "Your wish will be fulfilled today." The devotees went inside the palace, and when they saw the dead body of a young boy, they understood that he must have been poisoned. They took some *caraṇāmṛta* and poured into the boy's mouth so that he immediately came back to life. Seeing this wonder, the king and his family members, who were otherwise averse to devotional service, fell at the feet of the devotees and prayed, "We surrender unto you. Please have mercy upon us."

The devotees gave everyone spiritual initiation so that they became their disciples. All of them soon became advanced devotees, and they also took pleasure in serving saintly persons. In this way the Supreme Lord protected the words of the princess. The proof of this is the wonder performed by the saintly devotees. If anyone develops

an intense desire to see and serve saintly persons, then even today he can have all of his desires fulfilled by the mercy of pure devotees.

❀ **Text 51** ❀

There lived a devotee and his maternal uncle, whose intentions were very honest and grave. They pleased the Supreme Lord by their devotional service, which was performed spontaneously, and not just as a matter of worldly tradition. Both conceived of many plans to collect wealth so that they could construct a temple for Śrī Rāṅganātha, but every attempt failed. Finally, they became imitation Jains.

In a separate incident, to catch the swans that resided at Mānasarovara, hunters dressed themselves as Vaiṣṇavas. The devotee swans, respecting the *tilaka* and neck beads of the hunters, allowed themselves to be caught.

In yet another incident, despite knowing that his son had been killed by a so-called saintly person who came under the sway of greed, an avowed devotee gave him his daughter in marriage and showed him respect in other ways.

❀ Commentary ❀

❀ The maternal uncle and his cousin ❀

There were two devotees, one was a maternal uncle and the other was his cousin. Their devotional life was performed in a very grave manner. Please hear attentively how these two devotees pleased the Supreme Lord by their firm devotion. Both were great devotees and learned scholars as well. They were completely detached from worldly life. They left home and went to the forest so that they could worship the Lord in a solitary place.

On the shore of the Kāverī River in South India, they saw a beautiful Deity of Śrī Rāṅganātha, but there was no temple. Both of them decided: "We will stop everything else and somehow or other construct a beautiful temple for Lord Rāṅganātha." They began searching for wealth to build the temple, but even after trying very hard, they were only able to collect a very insufficient amount of wealth. Thereafter, they found a place from where they had an expectation of collecting some money.

Both the uncle and cousin saw that there was a temple of Śrī Pārasnātha, belonging to some Jain businessmen. The Deity in that temple was made of touchstone. According to their Vaiṣṇava tradition, devotees should not go to such a temple, considering such an act to be an offense. But still, these two devotees thought that they could do anything to satisfy their Lord Śrī Rāṅganātha.

They thought, "For the sake of the Lord, even if we have to go to hell after committing sinful activities, we will do this." They had no doubt in their minds and so without wasting time they joined the Jain *sampradāya* and took initiation from them. They lived at the temple and rendered service in such a way that it attracted the minds of all the people, just as the aroma of jasmine flowers attracts the minds of everyone. They completely satisfied the entire Jain community by their behavior and service attitude.

Finally, the temple management gave the two devotees charge of the temple. Thereafter, they began considering how to steal the Deity from the temple. After a great deal of research, they learned of a secret from the builder of the temple. They learned that a way to enter can be found at the very top of the temple.

Finding an opportunity one day, the two devotees took out some screws at the top of the temple so that there was a small opening. Then the uncle, with the help of a rope, entered the temple while his cousin waited at the top. The uncle tied the Deity securely with a rope and asked his cousin to pull it up. Then, with the help of the rope, the uncle easily climbed up to the top of the temple.

But as the uncle was trying to come out through the hole, his body got stuck. Still, the uncle did not feel any unhappiness because he knew that now a temple for Lord Rāṅganātha could be constructed. He said to his cousin, "Cut off my head so that people

will not criticize the dress of a Vaiṣṇava.” The cousin tried hard to pull his uncle through the hole, but he did not succeed. Perhaps the uncle’s body became enlarged because of his jubilation.

Thinking this to be the will of the Lord, the cousin obeyed his uncle’s order and cut off his head. He took the severed head and the Deity made of touchstone and departed. It was impossible for the cousin to maintain his life without his dear uncle. But still, his intense desire to construct a temple for Śrī Rāṅganātha kept him alive. Therefore he thought it wise to begin the temple construction and thus follow the order of his uncle. The cousin went to the place on the shore of Kāverī River where the Deity of Śrī Rāṅganātha was found, for it was there that they had decided to build the temple.

When the cousin arrived there, he saw that the foundation of the temple was already being dug. He became depressed, thinking that the construction had already begun by someone else, and that he was too late. When he came closer, he saw his most fortunate uncle supervising the digging of the foundation. They very happily embraced one another, their eyes beaming with joy. Only a devotee of the Supreme Lord can understand the happiness derived from meeting other devotees. Thus the uncle and cousin built a large temple for Lord Rāṅganātha, and even today one can visit it.

❀ The devotee swan ❀

There was a king who was suffering from leprosy. Many doctors tried to treat him, but he was not cured. Finally the doctors advised that somehow or other he should bring some swans so that they could prepare a medicine after killing them, and that with that medicine he would surely be cured. The king summoned some hunters and ordered, “Try to fetch me some swans from somewhere. Look until you find them and then bring them to me.”

The hunters replied, “Swans are available only at Mānasarovara. How can we bring them from that celestial region?” The king ordered, “If you don’t bring me some swans, you will be arrested and killed. And if you bring me the swans, you will be rewarded as much as you wish.”

Thereafter, four hunters somehow managed to go to Mānasarovara, but they were unable to catch any swans. The swans understood them to be hunters and so whenever they saw them, they flew away. The hunters noticed that when a saintly person went near the swans, they were not afraid. Knowing this, the hunters dressed as Vaiṣṇavas by putting on neck beads and marking their bodies with *tilaka*.

The four hunters departed and then returned after disguising themselves as devotees. When the swans saw their Vaiṣṇava attire, they understood that these people were hunters in disguise. Still, due to their respect for the Vaiṣṇava dress, they allowed

themselves to be captured. The hunters returned to the king with the swans.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Lord, knowing the swans to be great devotees, accepted the form of a physician in order to release them from their bondage. The Supreme Lord in the guise of a physician went to the city of the king and declared, "I treat and cure all kinds of leprosy which are normally incurable."

People brought this physician before the king. The Supreme Lord said, "Why have you brought these swans here?" The King replied, "I brought them here so that medicine can be made from their dead bodies." The Lord said, "Release them at once. I will cure your disease this very moment and make your body completely healthy." Still, the King said, "With great difficulty we have captured these swans. How can I let them go without first being cured of my leprosy?"

After hearing this, the doctor took out some medicine from His bag, and after making a paste, He applied it to the king's body. Immediately the leprosy disappeared. The king was overjoyed. The physician said, "Now you must release the swans." The king gratefully let the swans go. The King then said, "I dedicate myself unto You, because of Your compassion. Please take some land, or even a village, from me as charity. He is a fortunate person who receives Your *darśana*."

The Supreme Lord said, "The swans were saved, your leprosy is cured, and I am fully satisfied. If you still wish to please me then always render service to the Supreme Lord and His devotees. By doing so, you will

perfect your human birth, which is very rarely attained.

The king accepted the order of the Supreme Lord and declared throughout his kingdom: "Everyone should engage in the service of Lord Hari and render service to saintly persons." In this way devotional service spread throughout his kingdom. One should try to become a swan-like Vaiṣṇava, for a swan can distinguish milk from water, or in other words, spirit from matter. This understanding is highly beneficial for all kinds of people.

The hunters considered how, because of their Vaiṣṇava attire, the swans had placed their faith in them so that their lives were saved from the wrath of the king. They thought "How can we give up this dress, having received the human form of life?" In this way, the hunters also became devotees of the Lord and continued to wear the Vaiṣṇava dress. Their minds came to be fully absorbed in thoughts of devotion for the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

❀ The avowed devotee ❀

Now hear about an avowed devotee's devotion for saintly persons. This devotee used to serve saintly persons by utilizing all of his possessions. He would always think of different ways and means to render service to the devotees of the Lord. Because of his service attitude, many saintly persons would visit his house. He was always very grave

and faithful. Whenever a devotee came to his house, he would carefully serve him and satisfy him.

Once, a devotee visited his house and became so happy by the service of the host devotee that he continued to stay there. He became friends with the son of the avowed devotee. Together they would roam about and play. Gradually, the mind of the saintly person became polluted. Actually, it was by the will of the Supreme Lord that his mind became polluted, and his greed for the boy's golden ornaments was only a secondary cause of his degradation.

One day, both of them went outside the village. While playing, the guest killed the avowed devotee's son, being greedy for the golden ornaments he wore. He buried the body and then returned home while repenting his sinful deed.

At home, the boy's parents were waiting for their son, worried about what may have happened to him. In this way the whole day passed and still their son did not return. Then the avowed devotee, along with the saintly person and a maidservant, announced throughout the town: "Who has kidnapped my son? Anyone who can provide information about this will be rewarded with all the gold ornaments worn by him."

After hearing this announcement, a *sannyāsī* came forward and said to the king that the saintly person had killed his son and then buried him. The *sannyāsī* then took the avowed devotee and showed him the place where his son was buried. The

avowed devotee surprisingly said, "Arrest this *sannyāsī*, for he has killed my son. We are lucky that we have found the murderer."

The *sannyāsī* fearfully said, "I have seen this with my own eyes and thus I have told you about the death of your son. Please release me. I am not telling you a made up story." The avowed devotee said, "If you wish to be saved from this danger then never again blame a devotee. Leave this village and go elsewhere. Otherwise, you will not be spared."

The *sannyāsī* agreed to this, and so he was released and left the village. Meanwhile, the avowed devotee performed the funeral rites for his son and returned home. He saw that the saintly person looked especially thoughtful and morose. As he was about to inquire from him the cause of his distress, his wife came and said that they should keep the *sannyāsī* at their palace by giving him their daughter in marriage. Hearing this, the avowed devotee felt agreeable and replied, "You have made a very good suggestion, even though you are distressed because of the grief caused by the death of your son. Such are the honest dealings of devotees towards other devotees."

Taking seriously the words of his wife, the avowed devotee summoned the saintly person and said, "Please accept the hand of my daughter in marriage. If she were married to a non-devotee, I would be very unhappy."

After hearing this proposal, the saintly person's mouth dried up as he softly

replied, "Alas! It is actually I that killed your son. Because of this, I feel so distressed at heart that it will not be possible for me to continue living. Do not utter the name of a sinful person like me."

And yet, the avowed devotee turned to his wife and said, "Just see the honesty of this devotee! He is ready to take all the blame for our son's death, even though he is innocent. I am really impressed by his honesty." The avowed devotee then said to the saintly person, "Please marry my daughter so that the pain in your heart will vanish. As long as I am alive, stay with me and live a comfortable life while enjoying our friendship."

Thus it came to be that the saintly person married the avowed devotee's daughter. One day thereafter, by the will of the Lord, the avowed devotee's spiritual master came to his palace. He was a great devotee and very pleasing to everyone. It was he who had explained to the avowed devotee the glories of serving saintly persons. While inquiring about the well-being of everyone, the spiritual master asked the avowed devotee, "Where is your son?"

The avowed devotee replied, "He is no more with us. He has gone back to Godhead." The spiritual master asked, "How did this happen?" The avowed devotee replied, "How can I say how he has left this world where death is awaiting everyone?" The spiritual master said, "Actually, the Supreme Lord has tested you. Your son has not died and that is why the Lord has sent me to you. Show me the place where your son's funeral

rites were performed."

The spiritual master personally went there and meditated on the Supreme Lord. Soon thereafter, the boy appeared, alive and healthy. In this way the Supreme Lord expands the glories of the devotees by testing them in various ways.

❀ Text 52 ❀

In all four *yugas*, the four-armed Supreme Lord makes the words of His devotees come true. 1. The Supreme Lord turned Śrī Bhuvana Singh Chauhan's wooden sword into an iron one. 2. The Supreme Lord changed the color of the hair of the Deity worshiped by Śrī Devājī Pāṇḍā to white, just to make his words come true. 3. When the devotee, Kāmadvaja, was asked by his brother, "Who will burn your body after your death?" he replied, "The Lord whom I am serving will burn my body." In order to keep these words truthful, Śrī Hanumān came after his death, prepared a nice funeral pyre, and performed the funeral rites. 4. When the devotee, Jayamala, was engaged in battle, the Supreme Lord personally went on a horse and defeated his enemies. 5. When a cowherd man's buffaloes were lost, he came home and told his mother, "I donated the buffaloes to a *brāhmaṇa*. He will return them, along with a great quantity of ghee." The Supreme Lord brought four buffalos just to prove the words of His devotee to be true. 6. In order to substantiate the words

of His devotee, Śrīdhara, Lord Śrī Rāma accompanied him to his house while giving him protection. In this way, the Supreme Lord repeatedly acts so that the words of His devotees are proven to be true.

❁ Commentary ❁

❁ Śrī Bhuvana Singh ❁

In Satya, Tretā, and Dvāpara *yugas*, the Supreme Lord always acted in such a way that the words of His devotees would prove to be true. These incidents are described in the *Purāṇas*. Now hear about some incidents that took place in Kali-yuga.

There lived a great devotee named Bhuvana Singh Chauhan in the kingdom of Udaipur. For his maintenance, the king allotted him some land that allowed him to earn two lakhs of rupees annually. From that income Bhuvana Singh Chauhan lived a very comfortable life, and he enjoyed rendering service to saintly persons.

One day, the King of Udaipur went to the forest to hunt. He was accompanied by his army, ministers, servants, and Bhuvana Singh Chauhan. In the forest the king chased a female deer, but could not kill her. Realizing that the prize was slipping from their hands, Bhuvan Singh Chauhan urged his horse on towards the deer, and with his sword cut her very deeply. That female deer was pregnant, and when Bhuvana

Singh Chauhan saw her dying in pain, along with her baby, his mind became filled with compassion. He lamented, saying, “Why did I commit this sin of killing this deer? People call me a devotee, but my activities are like that of a non-devotee sinful person. Even if I try, I may not be able to avoid this kind of merciless killing and so it is best for me to give up my iron sword and use a wooden sword instead.” Thinking like this, he threw away his iron sword and kept a wooden sword in its sheath.

Bhuvana Singh Chauhan had a brother who saw that his sword was made of wood. That brother could not keep this to himself and so he went and told the king, just to lessen the prestige of Bhuvana Singh Chauhan. However, the king did not believe him, even though he swore on the name of God hundreds of times that what he was saying was true. Seeing his effulgent Vaiṣṇava attire, and knowing of his prowess, the king did not dare to even discuss this with Bhuvana Singh Chauhan. The brother repeatedly informed the king of the wooden sword, but every time, that ruler of men ignored him. In this way, one full year passed.

Finally the brother forcefully declared, “If Bhuvana Singh Chauhan’s sword is not made of wood, and if I am thus telling a lie, then you can kill me.” The king called a meeting in the garden of the royal palace in which his ministers, commander-in-chief, and other responsible persons were present. When everyone sat down after having their meal, the King said, “I wish to reward that

person whose sword shines the brightest." Saying this, the king took out his sword and showed it to everyone.

The king then checked all of the leaders' swords, one after another, and finally, when it was Bhuvana Singh Chauhan's turn, that ruler of men said, "So, Bhuvana Singh, what about yours?" In reply, Bhuvana Singh Chauhan wanted to say, "My sword is made of *dāra*, or wood," but he helplessly said, "My sword is made of *sāra*, or iron." These words simply came from his mouth, and consequently, the Supreme Lord transformed his wooden sword into an iron sword, just to make his words true.

When Bhuvana Singh Chauhan took out his sword and showed it, everyone's eyes shone with amazement. Indeed, the members of the assembly felt as if the sword was not simply a sword, but a flash of lightning. The king was furious at the jealous brother and chastised him profusely. He then ordered his guards, "Arrest this man and kill him by hanging him over the death trap. He is a burden to the earth."

However, when Bhuvana Singh Chauhan saw the danger to the life of his brother, he folded his hands and prayed to the king, "Why are you having him killed? He has no fault. Actually, he did not tell a lie. After the pregnant deer was killed by my sword, I exchanged my iron sword with a wooden one. Today the Supreme Lord transformed my wooden sword into an iron one."

Believing this wonder, the king was impressed and said, "From this day onwards,

you need not come to the royal assembly for executing your duties. You can take four lakhs, or if you want, eight lakhs, as an annual allowance instead of your usual two lakhs. From time to time I will personally come to your house to have your *darśana* so that some day I too will be delivered from the ocean of material existence."

❀ Śrī Deva Pāṇḍā ❀

One day, although generally very punctual, the king arrived late to have the *darśana* of the four-armed Supreme Lord. It was time and so the *pūjārī*, Śrī Deva Pāṇḍā, put the Lord to rest. He put on his own head the flower garland of the Lord which was offered to the king every day. It was just then that Śrī Deva Pāṇḍā received the news that the king was arriving. Śrī Deva Pāṇḍā took the flower garland from his head, and when the king arrived, placed it around his neck. By the arrangement of Providence, a single gray hair from the Pāṇḍā's head was struck in the garland. Seeing this, the king sarcastically said, "Did the Lord's hair turn grey?"

Śrī Deva Pāṇḍā answered, 'Yes.' The King then said, "Tomorrow morning I will see." The word "yes" automatically came from his mouth and so Śrī Deva Pāṇḍā became extremely anxious. He thought, "The king will certainly have me killed because I told a lie." He could not find any remedy for the difficulty and so he simply began meditating on the Lord's lotus feet. He prayed, "O Lord

Hṛṣikeśa, kindly turn Your hair grey so that my life will be saved. You are the protector of the devotees, although I know that I have no genuine devotion for You.”

The Supreme Lord spoke to Śrī Deva Pāṇḍā: “I have already turned My hair grey. If you don’t believe Me then come here and see for yourself.” Śrī Deva Pāṇḍā had been in great distress due to fear of the king’s wrath, and the risk that he might kill him, but when he heard the sweet words of the Supreme Lord, he got back his life. When he went inside the temple, he saw that the Lord’s hair was actually grey. The Pāṇḍā could very well appreciate how merciful the Supreme Lord was to Him. His eyes became filled with tears as he thought, “I have never rendered service to the Lord with love and devotion. Still, the Lord is very kind because He protects His devotees and maintains them. I am not a pure devotee of the Lord and so I wonder why He bestowed His mercy upon me.”

Thus Śrī Deva Pāṇḍā came to understand that the Lord accepted his good intentions, even though he had somehow told a lie. The Supreme Lord is always merciful to His sincere devotees. That day, the Lord demonstrated this mysterious truth.

The next morning, the king came to the temple of the four-armed Lord to see if His hair was grey or black, as usual. He certainly was astonished to see that the color of the Lord’s hair was grey. The king thought, “The pāṇḍā must have brought some grey hair from somewhere and put it on the Lord’s

head.”

In order to test this, the king pulled a single hair from the Lord’s head. When he pulled the hair, the Lord raised His eyebrows in an expression of pain. The hair was uprooted and blood came from the root so that drops of the blood fell on the king’s body. The king fell unconscious onto the floor after witnessing this most uncommon occurrence. After about three hours, he regained consciousness and begged pardon from the Lord from his countless offences. The four-armed Lord said, “Your punishment is that whoever occupies your royal throne should not come to the temple to have My *darśana*.”

Following the order of the Lord, even today whoever becomes the King of Udaipur does not go the temple of Caturbhuja to have His *darśana*. Every king passes this order on to his successor so that this tradition had stood the test of time.

❁ Śrī Kāmadhvaja ❁

In the kingdom of Udaipura there lived a servant family in which there were four brothers. Among them, three brothers worked for the king. The other brother, named Kāmadhvaja, was a devotee of the Supreme Lord. He resided in the forest, performing his *bhajana*. He would go to his house when it was time to take *prasāda* and then quickly return to the forest. His three brothers repeatedly advised him: “Every day you should attend the king’s assembly so

that you will be given a monthly salary like the other workers.”

Śrī Kāmadhaja would always reply, “I work only for that person of whom I am the servant. I would gladly go to His assembly every day.” One day, his brothers said to him, “When you die, who will perform your funeral rites?” Śrī Kāmadhaja fearlessly replied, “He whom I serve will perform the funeral rites for me.”

One day, while performing His *bhajana*, Śrī Kāmadhaja left his body in the forest. By the order of Lord Rāmacandra, the master of the devotees, Śrī Hanumān came there, prepared a funeral pyre with sandalwood, and performed the last rites. By contact with the purified smoke of that funeral pyre, many ghosts and witches were delivered. Such are the glories of the Lord’s devotees.

❀ Śrī Jayamala ❀

Śrī Virama Singh’s son, Śrī Jayamala, was a resident of Medatā city in Rajasthan. Later on he moved to Jodhapura. He was very attached to the Lord’s worship and service. He was said to be a disciple of Śrī Hita Harvaṃsa. He always worshiped the Lord perfectly and without any fault. Every day he would spend four hours in the temple of the Lord, performing various services. He had a rule that if during his service to the Lord anyone would approach him and give him some news, he would simply ignore that person. Not only that, he would have the

messenger killed. Out of fear, nobody dared to disturb him while he was performing his service.

One of Jayamala’s brothers, the King of Mandovara, was inimical toward him. Once, taking advantage of his brother’s rule, he surrounded Jayamala’s city with his vast army. Nobody had the courage to approach King Jayamala to give him the news. Finally, Śrī Jayamala’s mother went and told him about the invasion. After hearing everything, Jayamala simply said, “God will surely do what is best,” and then continued with his service to the Lord.

Meanwhile, to save his devotee from danger, the Supreme Lord personally appeared and went to the battlefield, riding on a horse. The Lord fought single-handedly and killed all the enemy soldiers. He then kept the horse in the stables and disappeared. Everyone was overjoyed, and there was everywhere talk of the enemy’s defeat.

After completing his daily worship, Jayamala decided to go to the battlefield and so he went to the stables and saw that his horse was breathing heavily and appearing quite tired. He asked the people there, “Who rode this horse?” Everyone kept quiet because none of them knew the actual truth. Thereafter, when Jayamala entered the battlefield, he saw that all of the enemy soldiers were lying on the ground injured or dead, and his brother was also lying there injured.

That brother asked Śrī Jayamala, “Who

was that warrior who took charge of your army? He alone drove away all of my soldiers. Although He injured me, after seeing His beautiful form my mind has become attracted to Him.”

When Śrī Jayamala heard this, he was delighted and said, “You are fortunate, for you have seen Him with your own eyes, but I am unfortunate because my eyes are simply anxious to see Him. Up to this day, I have not attained His *darśana*.”

Jayamala could understand that it was his worshipable Lord Śyāmasundara who had displayed His mercy. Śrī Jayamala forgave his brother and urged him to return home. The brother promised to render service to the Supreme Lord every day. Śrī Jayamala’s brother was aggrieved because he knew that he had misbehaved with a devotee of the Lord. He had attacked him, and yet the Supreme Lord had awarded him His *darśana*. In this way the Supreme Lord upheld the words of His devotee.

❀ The devoted cowherd ❀

There lived a cowherd in a village. He was a great devotee of the Lord who would serve other devotees with love and devotion. Whatever he could collect, he would use for the service of saintly persons. On a festival day, his mother gave him many delicious foodstuffs. The cowherd took the foodstuffs and went to the forest to tend his buffaloes. He left the buffaloes in the forest to graze

while he went to an āśrama in the forest to feed the saintly persons residing there. He sat down near these saintly personalities until all of them had finished their meal and so he was late to return to the pasturing grounds.

When the cowherd returned, he saw that someone had stolen his buffaloes. In the evening, he returned home without them and so his mother asked, “Where are the buffaloes?”

Not wanting his mother to feel unhappy, he hid the truth and told her a lie. He said, “I have given the buffaloes to a *brāhmaṇa*. He is very poor and has nothing to eat. He will take care of the buffaloes and maintain himself by drinking buttermilk. He has promised that he will soon return all of the buffaloes, along with a great quantity of ghee.”

After some time, the festival of Dipāvali arrived. The thieves bathed the buffaloes and decorated their horns and legs with silver ornaments. Thereafter, as the thieves were intoxicated while singing and dancing, all the stolen buffaloes ran from that place and returned to the house of the cowherd, making a great sound. This happened by the will of the Lord. The devotee-cowherd said to his mother, “Look! The *brāhmaṇa* has sent back our buffaloes. He did not send any ghee because he sold it, and with that money he has purchased the silver ornaments now adorning our buffaloes.” In this way, the Supreme Lord made the words of His devotee come true.

❀ The devotee Sṛīdhara ❀

❀ Text 53 ❀

Now hear attentively the story of the exalted devotee, Sṛīdhara. Once he was walking down the street when suddenly some thieves attacked him. The thieves asked, "Is there anyone with you?" He answered, "The Lord of my life, Śrī Raghunātha, is with me." As the plunderers walked a bit further, they saw no one around and so they understood that there was no one accompanying their prey. They then made a plan to plunder and kill him. But then it came to be that the thieves saw the all-attractive Supreme Lord walking behind their victim with a bow and arrow in His hands.

Sometimes the thieves could not see the Lord and so they tried to kill Sṛīdhara, but immediately the Lord appeared and frightened them. Finally, when Sṛīdhara arrived home, the thieves could no longer see Lord Raghunātha. They asked Sṛīdhara, "Where is that person who was walking behind you with a bow and arrows in His hands?"

Sṛīdhara understood that it was his Lord Raghunātha who had given him protection. After receiving the Lord's mercy in this way, he left household life and began perform *bhajana*, and later on, the thieves became his disciples.

The Supreme Lord follows His devotees just as a cow follows her calf. There was a devotee of the Supreme Lord who had no material assets. One day, some saintly persons visited his house, but there was nothing suitable for their service. The Supreme Lord, along with Lakṣmī, became a traveler and allowed Himself to be plundered by that poor devotee.

For the purpose of acting as a witness, the Supreme Lord personally went to a devotee's house in the village of Khurdā.

Lord Śrī Rancodarāya went from Dvārakā to the house of His devotee, Rāmadāsa, at Dākor, and placed on His body the injuries caused by the blows given to him.

The Supreme Lord, who arrested King Bali, changed the weight of His body so that it became lighter than a pair of earrings. These pastimes of the Lord which display His unique character are most uncommon and are not known to everyone.

❀ Commentary ❀

❀ Śrī Haripāla ❀

The poverty-stricken devotee

The Supreme Lord follows His dear devotees just as an affectionate cow follows her calf. There was a devotee named Śrī Haripāla who was born in a *brāhmaṇa*

family. He was very fond of saintly persons and so he utilized his entire wealth in their service. When he ran out of money, he took a loan from the market and continued serving saintly persons. He did not give up his service to the devotees, even though he had a debt of thousands of rupees.

When people stopped giving him loans so that his service to saintly persons practically stopped, he took up the profession of a thief. Still, while stealing, he would only plunder those rich people who were averse to the Supreme Lord. He never plundered or gave trouble to the Lord's devotees.

One day, a group of devotees arrived at his doorstep. He greeted them respectfully and then discussed with his wife about how they could serve the devotees. They had nothing at home and so both husband and wife began to remember the Supreme Lord.

When Lord Kṛṣṇa, who was in the palace of Rukmiṇī in Dvārakā, understood that His poor devotee, Śrī Haripāla, was in anxiety, He also became anxious. Śrī Haripāla's determination to serve saintly persons had captivated the mind of Lord Kṛṣṇa and so He dressed in valuable clothing and ornaments so that he looked like a rich businessman and departed.

Rukmiṇī asked, "My Lord, where are you going today, looking like a rich businessman? The Lord responded, "I have a loving devotee who I want to meet." Rukmiṇī said, "Can I come with You?" The Supreme Lord replied, "Yes, let Us go."

Both dressed so They looked like a rich

couple and then went to the house of the devotee, Śrī Haripāla. The Lord said, "We have to go to such-and-such village and there is so much danger on the way. If someone can accompany us to our destination, we will pay him for his labor."

Śrī Haripāla said, "I have guests at home and so please give me my salary in advance." The Lord gave him the money. Śrī Haripāla gave the money to his wife and said, "With this money, arrange for the devotees' breakfast. I will go with Them and leave Them at their destination."

As Śrī Haripāla was leading Them through the jungle, he saw so much wealth in Their possession, and so he became very pleased, as if he has gotten a new lease on life. Śrī Haripāla looked very carefully and saw that They had no neck beads or *tilaka* on their foreheads. Besides, they were not behaving like Vaiṣṇavas or chanting the holy names of the Lord. They were decorated with valuable ornaments made of gold and jewels.

"They must have a huge amount of wealth at home and so even if I plunder all of their ornaments, it will not do Them much harm." Thinking like this, Śrī Haripāla said to the couple, "Whatever possessions you have with You, sacrifice for the sake of the devotees' service. Take off all Your ornaments and give them to me."

The couple took off everything without hesitation and gave it all to the Śrī Haripāla. Rukmiṇī had a toe ring which She was unable to take off. Śrī Haripāla tried to take it off by twisting Her toe. At this, She said, "You are

really very cruel. My toe will break and so let Me keep the toe ring.”

Śrī Haripāla said, “How can I leave it? With this I can feed a few more devotees. It is for this that I engage in this kind of work.” Hearing about his devotion for serving saintly persons, the Supreme Lord revealed Himself as Lord Śyāmasundara to his devotee. Lord Kṛṣṇa embraced Śrī Haripāla and blessed him, saying, “May you be My dearest devotee, and may you be the best of devotees.”

❀ The devotees of Śrī Sākṣī-gopāla ❀

Now hear about two *brāhmaṇas* that resided in Bengal. One was an elderly gentleman from an aristocratic family, and the other was a young man from a poor family. Once, these two *brāhmaṇas* set out to visit some holy places of pilgrimage. After traveling to many holy places, they finally arrived at Vṛndāvana. By the arrangement of Providence, the elderly *brāhmaṇa* became ill. The young *brāhmaṇa* took care of him and served him very nicely.

When the elderly *brāhmaṇa* regained his health, he gratefully said to the younger *brāhmaṇa*, “I will give you my daughter in marriage.” The young *brāhmaṇa* said, “What are you saying? I have no interest in marrying your daughter.” Still, the elderly *brāhmaṇa* humbly persisted in making his request. Finally, while standing before the Deity of Śrī Gopāla in His temple, the elderly *brāhmaṇa*

promised to give his daughter to the young *brāhmaṇa* in marriage, and he requested the Lord to act as a witness if need be.

The young *brāhmaṇa* accepted the proposal, having firm faith that the Deity would act as a witness if necessary. After some time, they left Vṛndāvana and continued traveling to various holy places before finally returning home. When enough time had passed, the young *brāhmaṇa* reminded the elderly *brāhmaṇa*, saying, “You promised to give me your daughter’s hand in marriage. Now you must make good your promise and arrange for the marriage of your daughter.”

However, when the elderly *brāhmaṇa* informed his wife and other family members of the marriage, they were all vehemently opposed and so he decided to break his promise. After some days, the young *brāhmaṇa* again requested the elderly *brāhmaṇa*, saying, “Quickly arrange for my marriage with your daughter, for you had promised to do this in front of the Deity of Śrī Gopāla in Vṛndāvana. Now it is your duty to keep your word.”

When the wife and son of the elderly *brāhmaṇa* came to know of the young *brāhmaṇa*, they angrily said, “What is this? Is our daughter to be married to a *brāhmaṇa* of a lower status than ours? We cannot sanction this marriage under any condition.”

Still, the elderly *brāhmaṇa* tried to convince them, saying, “I made a promise to marry my daughter to that *brāhmaṇa* in Vṛndāvana in front of the Deity of Śrī Gopāla. How can I break my promise?”

Some people of the village gathered, along with his wife and son, and advised the elderly *brāhmaṇa*, saying, "Simply say that when you made the promise you were not in a proper frame of mind. Because of your distressed condition, you spoke in a way that you later regretted."

When the young *brāhmaṇa* heard this, he called for a meeting of the heads of the village. In that assembly the young *brāhmaṇa* was asked if he had a witness to testify as to the truth of his claim. The young *brāhmaṇa* confidently replied, "Yes! This gentleman made the promise in front of the Deity of Lord Gopāla while requesting Him to bear witness if need be."

Hearing this, the village heads discussed the matter and came to the conclusion that if the Deity of Lord Gopāla would personally come from Vṛndāvana and bear witness then they would arrange for the marriage of the young *brāhmaṇa* with the daughter of the elderly *brāhmaṇa*.

The young *brāhmaṇa* set out for Vṛndāvana. Upon his arrival, he went to the temple and prayed, "O Lord Gopāla, who eternally resides in Vṛndāvana, please come with me to my village and bear witness to the promise made by the elderly *brāhmaṇa*. A written agreement has been made that if You come there, the promised marriage will take place."

The young *brāhmaṇa* sat in front of the Gopāla Deity, eagerly awaiting a favorable reply. Indeed, he sat for many hours without having any food or drink. Lord Gopāla then

spoke to him, saying, "I have never heard of a Deity walking!" The *brāhmaṇa* said, "How then can a Deity speak? If a Deity can speak then certainly He can also walk."

After hearing these words, which conveyed his ardent faith, Lord Gopāla agreed to go with the young *brāhmaṇa* to bear witness at his village. The Lord said, "I will come with you, but every day you must offer Me two kilos of good quality cooked rice, which we can share. I will follow you, and you will know of My presence by hearing the sound of My ankle bells. Never look back to see if I am there. As soon as you look at Me, I will no longer walk, but will stand still at that place."

The devotee set out from Vṛndāvana, and the Lord followed him. When they approached their destination, the young *brāhmaṇa* thought, "Now I will turn around and see how Lord Gopāla looks when He walks." But when the young *brāhmaṇa* looked back, he saw Śrī Gopāla standing still while sweetly smiling. Lord Gopāla then told the young *brāhmaṇa* to go to the village and call everyone to come and have His *darśana*.

The young *brāhmaṇa* rushed to the village, where he announced: "Come and see Lord Gopāla, who has personally come from Vṛndāvana to act as a witness." When everyone heard this, they were certainly astonished. All the villagers ran to the spot and had the *darśana* of the large Deity of Śrī Gopāla. Lord Gopāla spoke to the village heads, confirming the truth of the elderly *brāhmaṇa*'s promise. The desires of the two devotees were thus fulfilled by the

incomparable mercy of the Supreme Lord, Gopāla.

Everyone fell down at the Lord's lotus feet and glorified Him with selected prayers. From that day onwards, Śrī Gopāla became known as Sākṣī-gopāla because He had acted as *sākṣī*, or a witness. This Deity never returned to Vṛndāvana. The local people kept the Lord at that place with their expressions of humility and devotion. The local king arranged for nice worship and service for Lord Gopāla. Even today this Deity is present as Sākṣī-gopāla at Remunā, near Jagannātha Purī.

❀ Śrī Rāmadāsa ❀

There is a village known as Ḍākora near Dvārakā, where a devotee named Śrī Rāmadāsa once resided. He was very attached to performing devotional service to the Supreme Lord. He would go to Lord Śrī Raṇachoḍa's temple at Dvārakā every Ekādaśī and chant and sing the entire night. When he became old, the Supreme Lord instructed him, saying, "You don't have to come all the way here and stay up the whole night on Ekādaśī. You can stay at home and do this." However, the devotee Rāmadāsa did not accept the Lord's advice.

Seeing the strong determination of His devotee, the Supreme Lord again spoke, saying, "I can no longer tolerate the hardships you are enduring when you come to My temple. Therefore, I will very soon

come to your house. On the next Ekādaśī, bring a vehicle and keep it near the window at the back of the temple. I will open the window so that you can place Me on your lap and take Me in the vehicle to your house."

Rāmadāsa did exactly as the Lord instructed. He went to Lord Raṇachoḍa's temple in a vehicle. Everyone thought, "This devotee is now very old and so he becomes too tired while walking. He no more has the strength to walk and so he has come in a vehicle."

Rāmadāsa sang the Lord's glories in the temple the entire night of Ekādaśī. Then the next night, as planned, he went inside the temple after everyone had left. He felt great excitement course through his entire body. He took off all the ornaments from the Deity and kept them on the altar. He had love for the Supreme Lord and not for the ornaments. He put the Deity of Śrī Raṇachoḍa in his vehicle and departed.

The next morning, when the *pujārīs* opened the temple, they saw that the Deity was gone. People assumed that since Rāmadāsa had come in a vehicle, he must have taken the Deity with him. The *pujārīs* gave chase to Rāmadāsa. When Rāmadāsa saw the *pujārīs* approaching from behind, he asked the Lord, "What should I do now?" The Lord replied, "Carefully place Me in this large well." Rāmadāsa did that and departed in his vehicle. The *pujārīs* arrested Śrī Rāmadāsa and severely beat him so that there were many injuries all over his body.

After beating Rāmadāsa, the *pujārīs*

searched for the Deity of Śrī Raṇachoda inside the vehicle, and then in the four directions, but they could not find Him. Thus they lamented, “We have uselessly beaten this devotee.”

Then one of the *pujārīs* said, “I saw Rāmadāsa coming from this direction and so let us all go and look there.” Everyone went towards the large well and found the Lord inside. The water in the well had become red, like blood. The Supreme Lord said, “You have beaten My devotee and so I have placed all of his injuries on My body. Because of that, the water in the well has turned red. Because of your offensive behavior, I will never return with you.”

After saying this, the Lord told them about another Deity which they could find in another place and said, “Find that Deity and install Him in the temple. For your livelihood, take the weight of this Deity in gold and return home.” Being greedy, the *pujārīs* liked this arrangement and said, “Yes! Give us the gold.”

Thereafter, at Rāmadāsa’s house, the Supreme Lord said, “O Rāmadāsa, bring a scale and give them My weight in gold.” Rāmadāsa replied, “But My Lord, where is so much gold? I have no gold!” The Lord said, “Take one of the earrings from your wife and weigh it.”

Someone placed the Deity of Śrī Raṇachoda on one side of the scale and the earring on the other. To everyone’s surprise, the side with the earring outweighed the side with the Deity. Everyone was suspicious and so

they changed sides and weighed the earring and Deity again. Again the earring proved heavier. Seeing this, all the *pujārīs* became ashamed and returned home. There, they discussed among themselves, saying, “What kind of comfort or happiness will the Lord enjoy in the house of that poor Rāmadāsa? What should we do?”

Indeed, the *pujārīs* had become totally bewildered and bereft of all good sense. The Lord began to reside at the house of His devotee, Rāmadāsa. From this incident it is to be understood that devotion to the Supreme Lord is of utmost importance. Śrī Raṇachoda and His beloved consort manifest Themselves in the hearts of those who cultivate devotional service by hearing, chanting, and meditating upon Them.

When the Supreme Lord bound Bali Mahārāja, He became known as the gatekeeper of Bali. And when the Lord took upon His own body the injuries of His devotee, He became known as Āyudha-cata. When the devotees hear such a name, it pains their hearts. The Lord enacted this pastime to show that He and His devotees are non-different. Otherwise, who could injure the Lord? Even today, a bandage is offered to the body of Lord Raṇachoda.

❁ Text 54 ❁

Just as how in Dvāpara-yuga Lord Brahmā had stolen all of Kṛṣṇa’s cows and calves and yet the residents of Vraja saw the cows

and calves in their houses just as before, so a similar and most wonderful incident took place in this age of Kali. This story is widely celebrated and so kindly hear me with concentrated attention. Once, some thieves stole the bulls belonging to a devotee of the Lord named Śrī Jasūsvāmī. Out of compassion, Lord Śyāmasundara gave him a pair of identical bulls. Śrī Jasūsvāmī used those bulls to till his land for one full year.

Just as Śrī Nāmadeva had previously done, Śrī Nandadāsa revived a dead calf.

It is a well known story how a mango tree full of fruit bent down for the devotee, Śrī Alha.

Once, so that He could be adorned with a crown offered by a devotee prostitute, Lord Raṅganātha bent down His head.

❀ Śrī Jasūsvāmī ❀

There lived a devotee named Śrī Jasūsvāmī in a tract of land situated between the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā. He regularly served the devotees with love and devotion, and for this he would cultivate his land to produce food grains. Once, some Vrajavāsī thieves stole his bulls, but he did not even notice this because the Supreme Lord replaced those bulls with identical ones. These bulls given by the Lord would work much harder and better than the previous ones, for they were divine in nature. Śrī Jasūsvāmī liked these bulls very much.

After about a year, the Vrajavāsī thieves were again passing by the āśrama of Śrī Jasūsvāmī and they saw the two bulls tied to a post. They thought, “Who brought our bulls here?” When they returned home, they were surprised to see that their bulls were in their proper places. The thieves returned to the āśrama of Śrī Jasūsvāmī and saw that the bulls were present there. They could not ascertain the truth of the matter. Finally, conceding defeat, they asked Śrī Jasūsvāmī about this and thus came to know that although they stole his bulls, he still had the same bulls and so was working as before. Thereafter, the thieves brought the bulls from their house, and the moment they arrived at Śrī Jasūsvāmī’s āśrama, the other pair of bulls disappeared.

The thieves were impressed with Śrī Jasūsvāmī’s prowess and influence, and they understood that the Supreme Lord had given him relief from his anxiety. Thus they had great faith in and devotion for Śrī Jasūsvāmī. They approached him and fell down at his feet. They displayed their humility and surrendered to him. When Śrī Jasūsvāmī saw their pure intentions, his heart melted, for he was an ocean of mercy. He initiated the thieves and made them his disciples. These people stopped stealing and, by the mercy of Śrī Jasūsvāmī, they became pure souls. They began serving the Supreme Lord and his devotees. They lived honestly and supplied food grains, milk, and yogurt for the service of saintly devotees. They regularly glorified the devotees and

served them with their very heart and soul.

❁ Śrī Nandadāsa ❁

There was a village named Havelī situated near Bareli. In that village lived a *brāhmaṇa* devotee of the Supreme Lord named Śrī Nandadāsa. He was very fond of serving the devotees. Because of this, another *brāhmaṇa* of that village became envious of him. One day, the envious *brāhmaṇa* brought a dead calf and threw it on the land of Śrī Nandadāsa. Having done this, he began calling Śrī Nandadāsa bad names. He spread a rumour everywhere that Śrī Nandadāsa had killed his calf as it was grazing in his field, and that it was still lying there. Not only that, the envious *brāhmaṇa* began to quarrel with the saintly devotees who used to visit Śrī Nandadāsa's house.

He accused them, saying, "What kind of Vaiṣṇavas are you? You visit the house of a person who kills cows. A real Vaiṣṇava would never kill a cow. This person is worse than a Muslim."

When Śrī Nandadāsa heard these accusations, he took the devotees with him, went to the field, and brought the dead calf back to life. Seeing this, the envious *brāhmaṇa*, as well as other people, came and fell at his feet. Śrī Nandadāsa forgave everyone and made their lives successful by awarding them engagement in the devotional service of the Lord. In this way all those persons who were averse to devotional service were converted

to devotees and began serving the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His devotees.

❁ Śrī Alha ❁

Once, the exalted devotee, Śrī Alha, who was a disciple of Śrī Anantānada Svāmī, was traveling to holy places of pilgrimage. While traveling, he saw a nice garden and so he sat down there and began worshiping his Lord. He was sitting under a mango tree and there were many ripe mangoes. Śrī Alha requested the gardener to give him a few mangoes so that he could offer them to the Lord. However, the gardener simply said, "The mangoes are there in the tree. If you want, you can take them."

As Śrī Alha looked at the mangoes, which were very high off the ground, the branches of the mango tree bent downwards. Śrī Alha happily took some mangoes and offered them to his worshipable Lord. Seeing this wonderful incident, the gardener ran to the king and informed him of what had happened. The king was normally averse to devotees, but when he heard this, he became anxious to meet Śrī Alha. The king quickly went to the garden, and after offering his obeisances to the devotee, he said "Today my life has become successful. Kindly bestow your mercy upon me."

Śrī Alhaji sweetly replied, "My dear King, please take shelter of devotional service to the Lord with faith and determination." In this way Śrī Alha delivered the king.

❀ Śrī Vāramukhī ❀

Now hear the story of a devotee prostitute, which is very interesting and imparts to us an important lesson. The prostitute's house was filled with wealth, and she had a lot of property, but they were of no use because they were not utilized in the service of either the Supreme Lord or His devotees.

One evening, a large group of devotees was walking down the street while on tour, and because it was getting late, they needed a place to rest. When the devotees saw the shady courtyard of the prostitute's house, they liked it very much. All the devotees sat down there, took out their Deities, and placed them nicely for worshiping. They had stopped at that place because the area was very pleasing, and they had no desire in their minds for enjoying luxurious comfort.

At that time, the prostitute, decorated with valuable ornaments, came out of her house. When she saw the swan-like devotees, whose hearts were pure, she thought, "What good fortune has come to me today? So many devotees have arrived at my doorstep. It is sure that they do not know my name and profession."

Thinking like this, the prostitute went inside her house and brought out a plateful of gold coins. She placed the plate in front of the devotees and said, "Kindly offer this to your worshipable Lords." Her eyes were filled with tears of joy.

Looking at the plate of gold coins, the devotees asked, "Who are you? Which family

do you belong to?" While hearing these questions, the prostitute became quite bashful. She was in great anxiety and did not know how to reply. Seeing her in anxiety, the devotees told her that she should tell them the truth without hesitation, and that she should not doubt their words.

The prostitute folded her hands and said, "I am a prostitute." After saying this, she fell at the feet of the saintly devotees and prayed, "My house is full of wealth. Kindly accept all of it. If you consider my profession and thus do not want to accept the wealth, then know for sure that I am as good as dead. I will not be able to continue living."

The devotees responded, "We have only one idea of how you can utilize all your wealth in the service of the Supreme Lord. Make an opulent crown with this wealth and offer it to Lord Rāṅganātha. There will be no objection in consideration of your caste and profession. We are sure Lord Rāṅganātha will accept it."

The prostitute said, "My dear sirs, how will Lord Rāṅganātha accept a crown offered by a prostitute whose wealth has not even been touched by the *brāhmaṇas*?" The devotees replied, "Do not worry. Have faith that the Lord will certainly accept your service. Besides, we will stay here until this service is performed. Begin making a crown for the Lord."

Thereafter, the prostitute used all her wealth to prepare an opulent and attractive crown. She then dressed herself nicely and, keeping the crown on a big plate, as ordered

by the devotees, fearlessly entered the temple of Raṅganātha. However, after entering the temple, she suddenly felt embarrassed and so came outside. The prostitute condemned herself because by providence she was unfit to enter a temple, being contaminated. The devotees asked her why she was afraid, and she replied that she was unfit to enter a temple.

Thereafter, Lord Raṅganātha, having seen the humility and devotion of the prostitute, ordered His *pūjārīs*, “Go and bring that lady here and let her put the crown on My head with her own hands.”

The *pūjārīs* summoned the prostitute, and as she tried to put on the crown, Lord Raṅganātha bent His head downward to gracefully accept the offering. Because of the prostitute’s good character, both the minds of the devotees and the mind of the Supreme Lord became saturated with love and devotion. People glorified the devotees and the Supreme Lord for their efforts to deliver the fallen souls.

❀ Text 55 ❀

Compared to Satya, Tretā, and Dvāpara *yugas*, lotus-eyed Lord Rāmacandra has displayed special mercy to His devotees in Kalī-yuga. This fact is evident from the following story.

A *brāhmaṇa* devotee and his wife were going to his in-laws’ house. On the way, they

were attacked by plunderers. While leading the *brāhmaṇa* couple into the forest, the plunderers deceitfully told them that Lord Rāmacandra was stationed between them and their assailants. They assured the couple that if anyone tried to harm them, the Lord would protect them.

When the evil-minded plunderers went into the dense forest, they killed the devotee *brāhmaṇa*. While the devotee *brāhmaṇī* lamented, she called out: “May that Lord Rāmacandra who we believed to be standing between us and the plunderers give us protection.”

When Lord Rāmacandra heard the pathetic crying of His lady devotee, He immediately delivered her from the ocean of grief. The Lord killed all the miscreants and revived the devotee *brāhmaṇa*. Such is the mercy that the Supreme Lord shows to His devotees in this age of Kali.

❀ Commentary ❀

❀ The devotee *brāhmaṇa* couple ❀

A devotee *brāhmaṇa* was once going with his wife to his in-laws’ house to attend a religious ceremony. He was taking his wife to her father’s house for the first time since their marriage. His wife was a very devoted lady. As they were going on the road, they met a gang of plunderers. The *brāhmaṇa* casually asked, “Where are you all going?”

The thieves replied, "We are going wherever you are going." Upon hearing this, the *brāhmaṇa* became fearful and suspicious. The thieves wanted to mislead the couple into a dense forest and so they said to the *brāhmaṇa*, "Come with us. This road is direct and safe."

The *brāhmaṇa* did not heed their advice and refused to go with them. Just to convince the *brāhmaṇa*, the thieves said, "Do not be afraid. Have faith in us. Lord Rāmacandra is constantly between you and us."

When the plunderers thus convinced the *brāhmaṇa*, he became a little relaxed, but still he had some doubt in his mind. His wife said to him, "Let us go with them. How often do you find that the holy name of Lord Rāmacandra has come to you of its own accord? We should have faith in both the holy names of the Lord and the chanters of the holy names."

Seeing his wife's faith in the holy names of the Lord, the *brāhmaṇa* felt happy. Placing his faith on those who made assurances while uttering the holy name of Lord Rāmacandra, he decided to go with the plunderers. He thought, "Whether they treat us nicely or mistreat us, we have nothing to fear because Lord Rāmacandra is between them and us as a protector. Besides, my wife has displayed immense faith in devotional service and the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. Genuine devotion is certainly present in her."

Thinking like this, the *brāhmaṇa* accepted the advice of his wife. Thereafter, when

they entered deep within a dense forest, the plunderers killed the *brāhmaṇa*, being greedy to steal his ornaments. They forcibly took the *brāhmaṇi* as she cried due to the pain of losing her husband. As they dragged her, the *brāhmaṇi* kept looking behind her. The thieves chastised her, saying, "Who are you looking for behind us? We have killed your husband and so you can forget about him."

The lady devotee replied, "I am looking for that person whom you assured would be our protector." Just then, Lord Rāmacandra appeared on the scene with a bow and arrows in His hands. The Supreme Lord, who annihilates the wicked, killed all the plunderers and brought back to life the devotee *brāhmaṇa*. In this way, the Lord saved the *brāhmaṇa* couple when they were drowning in an ocean of danger. In this story, faith in the protection of the Supreme Lord, and an example of reciprocation between the Supreme Lord and His devotees, are described.

❀ Text 56 ❀

There was a saintly king who had great devotion for the dress of a Vaiṣṇava. Simply by hearing this story, one advances in devotion to the Supreme Lord. Whenever this king would see anyone with *tilaka* and neck beads, he would treat him as being on the level of the Supreme Lord, and his spiritual master. Even if one was a learned scholar of all the

six branches of knowledge, but was not a devotee, the king would consider him to be inferior to a Vaiṣṇava.

Once, a group of comedians dressed themselves as devotees with *tilaka* and neck beads and approached the king. The king had a hard and fast rule that all Vaiṣṇavas should be respected as one respects God. In that mood, the king washed the feet of the comedians. When the comedians saw such devotion in the king, and when they thus received his touch and affection, devotion began to sprout within their hearts. Thereafter, the comedians continued wearing the dress of Vaiṣṇavas, but now with faith and devotion. Indeed, they never gave up this dress during the remainder of their lives. This is the result of having the *darśana* and touch of a pure devotee, even if obtained in a joking manner.

❁ Commentary ❁

❁ A king faithful to the Vaiṣṇava dress ❁

There lived a king who was a devotee of the Lord that never gave any wealth in charity to singers, dancers, and comedians. He was fully convinced that everything belongs to the Supreme Lord. With this in mind, he thought, “I cannot give any money to anyone who is averse to the Supreme Lord.”

A group of comedians decided to rob the king, and for this purpose they dressed as

saintly persons and approached him. They first allowed the king to worship them, and then they began to sing and dance in front of the Deity while clapping their hands. The king, who had great faith in Vaiṣṇava attire, saw them absorbed in love of God and thus said, “You are glorious! You have favored me today by your audience.”

The king lovingly fed the disguised comedians and then brought a plate of gold coins and set it before them. The King requested, “My dear sirs, kindly accept this as *prasāda*.” Seeing the king’s firm faith in the Vaiṣṇava dress, and his devotion for the Lord, a change took place in the hearts of the comedians. They also became devoted to the Lord. They said, “We perceive a foul odor from this wealth, and so we prefer not to accept it. We now know that real wealth is love and devotion for God.”

Saying this, the comedians got up and started to leave. However, the king caught hold of their hands and inquired as to why they were going. They replied, “Now our intelligence has been purified by contact with the sublime mellows of devotional service. Please allow us to depart. We will go to a solitary place and worship the Supreme Lord.”

❁ Text 57 ❁

There once was a king who was highly introspective. He did not make an external show of devotion, and indeed, he didn’t

even wear neck beads or *tilaka*. He would always be engaged in contemplation, and meditation on the Supreme Lord, but would never reveal this to anyone. Thus no one knew that the king was a great devotee. He lived with his wife, relatives, and servants. His wife was also very devoted, and even she could not understand that her husband was regularly chanting the holy names of the Lord and meditating on Him. As a result, the queen considered her husband to be a non-devotee, and because of this, she was unhappy.

One day, as the king was sleeping, he uttered a holy name of the Supreme Lord. The queen heard this and was very happy to understand that her husband was actually a great devotee. Thereafter, she showed increased affection for the king and her face blossomed with happiness. When the king asked about the cause of her happiness, the queen replied, "I became happy because I heard you chanting the Lord's holy name while sleeping." Hearing this, the saintly king lamented as he said, "Today my devotion has become exposed and so my life has been ruined."

❀ Commentary ❀

❀ The introspective king ❀

The wife of an introspective king was very devoted, but she was unhappy that

she did not get a devotee husband. This lamentation increased day by day. This was ironic, because the queen did not know of the devotional mood of her husband. One night, as the king was sleeping and felt pangs of separation from the Lord in his dream, he loudly cried out, "O Bihārī!" Only then did the queen realize the true influence of her husband. She could now understand that he was a great devotee. Indeed, the queen merged into an ocean of happiness when she heard the holy name of the Supreme Lord from the mouth of the king.

To celebrate, the next morning the queen arranged for a grand festival, and for that purpose she spent so much money. The king was surprised when he saw the opulent arrangements and asked his queen about this. The queen explained everything to the king, who then fell unconscious onto the floor. The King thought, "The holy name of the Lord was my life and soul, and when it slipped from my mouth, my devotional mood was exposed. Because of this, I can see no more reason for continuing my life."

While thinking like this, the king gave up his life in separation from the holy name of the Lord. Seeing that her husband had given up his life, the queen felt unbearable despair. She lamented, "Although my husband was a great devotee, I could not recognize his internal devotional mood."

Feeling depressed, the queen lost all enthusiasm for royal opulence and comfort. She became completely detached from worldly existence as she engaged in the

cultivation of devotional service. She stopped eating and drinking, and throughout the entire day and night she meditated upon the Supreme Lord and her husband. After a few days, the queen also gave up her life in separation from the Lord.

Actually, the glories of devotional service are unlimited, and as such no one can fully describe them. Only a fortunate person in whose heart devotion to the Supreme Lord has awakened can understand to some degree the depths of its glories. Material intelligence has no jurisdiction for delving into loving devotional service. This fact is clearly seen by reading, hearing, and remembering the characteristics of these exalted devotees.

❁ Text 58 ❁

There was once a disciple who firmly believed in and trusted the words of his spiritual master. He accepted the order of his spiritual master with determination and followed it throughout his life. One day, that disciple asked permission from his spiritual master, saying, "I have to go to another village for some work." The spiritual master replied, "You are free to go. I will tell you something when you come back." The disciple left the room of his spiritual master and departed. That very moment, the spiritual master left this world and went back to Godhead.

When the disciple returned to have the *darśana* of his spiritual master, people were

carrying his body so that they could perform the funeral rites. The disciple had firm faith in the words of his spiritual master and so he brought the body of his spiritual master to his house. Just to make his words prove true, the spiritual master came back to life and in front of everyone instructed his disciple, saying, "Serve all the devotees in the same way you serve me." Everyone present heard this and thereafter, the disciple followed this order to his best capacity.

❁ Commentary ❁

❁ A disciple dedicated to his guru ❁

There was once a disciple who had unflinching faith in and devotion for his spiritual master, but he treated other devotees with less respect than that which he showed his spiritual master. On the other hand, the spiritual master always regarded other saintly persons as worshipable. He wanted to impart this understanding to his disciple and thus save him from committing Vaiṣṇava *aparādha*. He tried instructing him many times, but could never change his attitude towards other devotees.

One day, when the disciple sought his permission to go to another village, the spiritual master said, "You have my permission to go, and when you return I will disclose to you a mystery."

However, before the disciple returned, the

spiritual master relinquished his body and left this world. Upon the disciple's return, he saw that some people were taking the spiritual master's body to the crematorium. The disciple tried to stop these people, saying that his spiritual master had not yet died because he had promised to disclose to him something most confidential. As you can imagine, the people did not take his words seriously. Finally, the disciple, while swearing on the name of the Lord, managed to stop them from cremating his spiritual master and instead brought the body to his house. There, the disciple prayed, "My lord, please tell me what you wanted to disclose to me."

Seeing the pure intentions of his disciple, the spiritual master returned so that the body came back to life. He then described the glories of the devotees and their service. When he had finished speaking, the disciple requested, "Kindly stay with us so that you can see how nicely I serve the devotees." The spiritual master remained there for one year and observed how his disciple served saintly persons. Thereafter, he left his body and went back to Godhead.

❀ Text 59 ❀

The instructions of Śrī Raidāsa, the crest jewel of all saintly persons, are fully capable of removing all kinds of doubts. Whatever Śrī Raidāsa said was in agreement with and approved by the Vedic literatures. He could

perfectly discriminate between that which is temporary and that which is eternal, and that which should be done and that which should be avoided. His teachings were placed by swan-like personalities within the cores of their hearts. He was born in a cobbler's family, but attained the mercy of the Supreme Lord and the highest destination. While seated on a royal throne, he displayed a golden sacred thread upon his body and thus proved to everyone that he was a *brāhmaṇa* in his previous birth. The members of the higher castes thus gave up their false prestige and aspired for the dust from his lotus feet.

❀ Commentary ❀

❀ Śrī Raidāsa ❀

Śrī Rāmānanda Svāmī had a *brahmacārī* disciple who went to the houses of the *brāhmaṇas* every day to beg for a small amount of wheat flour. With that flour he would serve the Lord and the devotees. Each day, the *brahmacārī* had to pass a grocery shop owned by a local businessman. That pious shop owner would always request the *brahmacārī* to take some things from his shop as a donation. Although the shopkeeper requested him ten or twenty times, because it was against his principles, the *brahmacārī* never accepted anything.

One day, it rained so heavily that it was

impossible for the *brahmacārī* to beg for wheat flour by going from door to door. Therefore he went to the shop owner and took whatever was required. Later, when Śrī Rāmānanda Svāmī made the offering of food to the Lord, he found it very difficult to meditate for the purpose of inviting the Lord. He asked the *brahmacārī*, “From where did you beg the food today?” The *brahmacārī* replied, “From a businessman who is a shop owner.” Śrī Svāmījī said, “Go and find it out exactly who that person is.”

When the *brahmacārī* went and spoke with the shop owner, he came to know that he had given the food grains after being instructed to do so by a cobbler. When he heard about this, Śrī Svāmījī became very angry and cursed the *brahmacārī*, saying, “You disobeyed my order and accepted alms from low-class people. Therefore you must take birth in the house of a cobbler.”

Thus it came to be that in his next life, the *brahmacārī* appeared as the devotee, Śrī Raidāsa. Once, Śrī Raidāsa’s mother wanted to give him milk, but the young boy did not like to drink it. What to speak of drinking the milk, he did not even like to touch his mother. This was because he could remember all the incidents of his previous life, by the mercy of his spiritual master.

Meanwhile, a divine voice from the sky declared to Svāmījī that because of his curse, his disciple had taken birth in the house of a cobbler named Raghu. After hearing this, Śrī Svāmījī thought that he had given severe punishment for a mild offence. Therefore,

out of compassion, he hurried to the house of Raghu. The boy’s parents were very unhappy because their son was not drinking milk. As soon as they saw Svāmījī approach, they ran to him and fell down at his feet. They prayed, “Kindly do something so that our child will drink milk and become strong.”

Thereafter, Svāmījī gave the young boy spiritual initiation and ordered him to drink milk. All of the sinful reactions of the boy disappeared and he began to drink milk so that he regained his health and strength.

Śrī Raidāsa considered Svāmījī to be as good as the Supreme Lord, and he lamented that he had previously been an offender. Svāmījī forgave him and personally came to his house to bestow his causeless mercy.

Śrī Raidāsa was a great devotee of the Lord, and he was also very devoted to the service of saintly persons. He utilized his wealth in the service of the devotees, but his father did not like this behavior. He didn’t want him to be part of the family and so he gave him a place to stay behind his house. The father also did not give Śrī Raidāsa any property. Śrī Raidāsa did not mind this, for he was fully dependant on the Supreme Lord.

Śrī Raidāsa’s occupation was to mend shoes and prepare new shoes from leather. He gave shoes in charity to the devotees, but never disclosed this to anyone. He built a cottage in which he installed his worshipable Lord. Whenever a saintly person visited him, he invited that person to reside in his cottage while he slept in the courtyard. Whatever he earned by his hard labor, he

distributed among the devotees and his own family. In this way, he passed his life. While residing in the open courtyard, he and his wife suffered from freezing cold in the winter and scorching heat in the summer. In spite of that, they were happy. They lived a simple life and remained free from anxiety.

One day, the Supreme Lord dressed as a devotee and arrived at Śrī Raidāsa's door. Śrī Raidāsa respectfully greeted the Lord and served Him. Being pleased by his service, the Lord disguised as a devotee gave him a touchstone and said, "Keep this valuable jewel safely." Śrī Raidāsa said, "My wealth is Lord Rāmacandra. This stone is of no use for me. I don't want any wealth or property. I want to dedicate my life to the service of the Lord and His devotees."

To display the power of the touchstone, the Lord touched it to a piece of iron and immediately it turned into gold. The Lord then gave the touchstone to Śrī Raidāsa and said, "Please keep it, and whenever you need it, take it out of its case." Śrī Raidāsa replied, "If You so desire then I will keep it in my cottage and whenever You want, You can take it."

About thirteen months later, the disguised Lord Śyāmasundara again visited Śrī Raidāsa. The Lord smilingly said, "My dear Raidāsa, did you use the touchstone at any time?" Śrī Raidāsa replied, "It is still lying in the place where You had kept it. Please take it. I have no interest in utilizing that stone, and anyway, I don't trust that kind of wealth. Please take it and do whatever you wish with

it. I am afraid of the touchstone and the gold it produces."

After hearing this, the Lord took the touchstone and left. Now hear about what happened after the Lord had departed. Every morning, when Śrī Raidāsa would go to render service to his Lord, he would find five gold coins. Śrī Raidāsa would pick them up with the help of tongs and throw them into the water of the Gaṅgā. Indeed, Śrī Raidāsa became fearful of rendering service to his Lord. Then, one night, the Supreme Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Give up your stubborn nature and let Me have My way. Just do as I wish."

At last, Śrī Raidāsa agreed to abide by the Lord's order. Every day he collected the gold coins and with them was able to construct a gorgeous temple for the Lord of intricate design. Indeed, it is not possible to tell how many rooms the temple contained. *Kīrtanas* and *bhajanās* were constantly being performed in the temple, so that it appeared as if the goddess, Bhakti-devī, were personally present.

This place of Śrī Raidāsa became a city of devotional service so that his fame spread all over the world. People from all over would come to have his *darśana*. Numerous varieties of foodstuffs were offered to the Lord every day, but because of this opulence, the local *brāhmaṇas* became envious. Indeed, their bodies burnt in the fire of jealousy.

The Supreme Lord is supremely independent, and He perfectly enacts His transcendental pastimes. Śrī Raidāsa had

lived in the courtyard, and had served the Lord within his simple cottage. Then the Supreme Lord had given him unprecedented opulence, and had also inspired the *brāhmaṇas* to oppose him. In this way, Śrī Raidāsa, the personification of loving service to the Lord, rendered service to the Lord. He gave up the mentality of flattering people for serving his own purposes.

By the inspiration of the Lord, the local *brāhmaṇas* assembled and decided to complain about Śrī Raidāsa to the king. Thus they approached the king and complained about him, calling him ill names and accusing him in various ways. They said, “He is a śudra, and yet he worships the Lord. This is against religious principles. This outrage should be stopped. Otherwise, your kingdom will be ruined.”

The king summoned Śrī Raidāsa, and after witnessing his extraordinary prowess, he allowed him to continue his service to the Lord. The king’s judgement went in favor of Śrī Raidāsa, and thus his fame spread everywhere. These pastimes of the devotees are certainly enchanting. According to the commentator, Śrī Priyādāsa, “I do not consider the association of those who are opposed to devotional service and the devotees to be unfavorable. I consider their association to be favorable because their opposition brings to our attention the glories and prowess of the pure devotees. In other words, when sinful people oppose the devotees, the devotees’ incomparable prowess and influence becomes manifest

so that the glories of devotional service are manifested.

There lived a queen named Jhālī in the city of Cittoragaḍa. She never took spiritual initiation from a saintly person. Finally, she went to Kāśī and heard the glories of Śrī Raidāsa and became his disciple. There were many *brāhmaṇas* who opposed the practices of Śrī Raidāsa. Because of their envy, they had lost all sense and good intelligence. They gathered many people and after approaching the king, said, “Śrī Raidāsa has no right to give initiation. His doing so violates the principles of religion. Kindly insure that justice is upheld so that your kingdom is saved from disaster.”

Thereafter, the king summoned Śrī Raidāsa. After placing a Deity of the Supreme Lord on a throne within the room, the king said, “You and the *brāhmaṇas* please summon the Supreme Lord. Whoever the Lord comes to see is certainly qualified to give initiation into the chanting of Vedic *mantras*.”

The *brāhmaṇas* invited the Supreme Lord by loudly chanting the Vedic *mantras*, but the Supreme Lord did not appear. Then Śrī Raidāsa sang this song: “O Lord, kindly demonstrate today the meaning of Your name, Patita-pāvana, the deliverer of the fallen souls.”

Just then, the Supreme Lord appeared on Śrī Raidāsa’s lap. By witnessing this wonderful incident, people began serving the Lord with faith and devotion. After this incident, Queen Jhālī returned home from

Kāśī and sent a message to Śrī Raidāsa: “O my lord and master, just as you had saved me by initiating me into the chanting of *mantras* at Kāśī, please bless me by coming to my house at Cittora.”

Śrī Raidāsa went to Cittora and was respectfully greeted and served by the queen. She utilized much wealth for organizing a festival wherein she fed many saintly persons and gave them cloth in charity.

Hearing about the festival, many *brāhmaṇas* came there. Since the *brāhmaṇas* did not agree to eat cooked foods, they were given uncooked food grains. Then after they had cooked the grains and had sat down to have their meal, they saw Raidāsa sitting between each of the many pairs of *brāhmaṇas*. Seeing this miracle, the *brāhmaṇas* became enlightened about the glories of devotional service. They all prayed for forgiveness with humbly uttered words.

Thousands of *brāhmaṇas* became Raidāsa’s disciples. Indeed, Śrī Raidāsa peeled off his skin and revealed to everyone a golden sacred thread draped over his body. From this, everyone became convinced that he was a divine personality.

❀ Text 60 ❀

Śrī Kabīradāsa did not care for the six branches of philosophical knowledge because they are devoid of devotion for the Lord. He also did not care for mundane

varṇāśrama-dharma. He considered anything which is contrary to devotional service to be irreligion. He proved that without worship of the Supreme Lord, the performance of fire sacrifices, the practice of yoga, the observance of vows, and the giving of charity are useless. He composed many verses for the benefit of all types of people without showing partiality toward any particular group. His words were equally beneficial for both Hindus and Muslims. He was always fixed in a joyful state of mind because of his spiritual knowledge and devotional service. Śrī Kabīradāsa never wrote or spoke anything under pressure, or the influence of any section of people. He always remained transcendental to such mundane considerations.

❀ Śrī Kabīradāsa ❀

Śrī Kabīradāsa had very sharp intelligence, and he was very grave. His heart was always filled with love and devotion. He adopted the path of devotional service while rejecting the distinctions imposed by mundane conceptions of caste. One day, a divine voice from the sky instructed, “Mark your body with *tilaka*, take initiation from ācāraya Śrī Rāmānanda, and wear *tulasī* neck beads.”

After hearing this Śrī Kabīradāsa replied, “How can I take *mantra* initiation from him? He considers me a *mleccha* and so he does not even wish to see my face.”

Again the voice from the sky spoke: “When

he goes to bathe in the Gaṅgā, fall down at his feet and take shelter of him.”

Śrī Kabīradāsa went to the Gaṅgā every morning to bathe. The next day, he went there as usual and lay down on the stairs leading to the bathing *ghāta*. Thereafter, when Śrī Svāmījī arrived and walked down the stairs, his lotus feet touched Śrī Kabīradāsa’s head. At that moment Śrī Svāmījī spontaneously said, “Chant the holy name of Rāma.” Thus Śrī Kabīradāsa accepted the holy name of Lord Rāma as his initiation *mantra*. In this way he became a disciple of Śrī Svāmījī and then returned home.

Śrī Kabīradāsa did whatever the divine voice from the sky had instructed. He decorated his body with *tilaka* as worn by the Rāmānanda *sampradāya*, and he wore *tulasī* neck beads. Seeing her son’s devotee dress and his chanting of the holy name of Lord Rāma throughout the entire day and night, his mother considered it to be a disturbance and so scolded him. She thought that somebody had converted her son into a Hindu *bābājī*.

Eventually the news reached Śrī Rāmānanda that Śrī Kabīradāsa claimed that he was his spiritual master. Hearing this, Śrī Svāmījī ordered his followers to summon Śrī Kabīradāsa. When Śrī Kabīradāsa was brought before him, Śrī Svāmījī, while sitting behind a curtain, asked, “When did I accept you as my disciple?”

Śrī Kabīradāsa reminded Śrī Svāmī of what had taken place at the bathing *ghāta* on the Gaṅgā. He said, “The holy name of Lord

Rāma is the *mahā-mantra*. This is stated in all scriptures. You awarded me that holy name and thus accepted me as your disciple.”

Hearing this, Śrī Svāmījī became very pleased. Coming out from behind the curtain, he embraced Śrī Kabīradāsa and said, “My dear son, your conclusion is correct. You constantly keep the holy name of Lord Rāma within your heart as your very life and soul.”

Śrī Kabīradāsa was a weaver of cloth as his means of livelihood, but his heart was always fixed on the holy name of Lord Rāma. Śrī Rāma resided in his heart and enacted many pastimes there. Śrī Kabīradāsa’s method of worship was unique so that it cannot be described by my words, but still, the attempt should be made. He would weave only as much cloth as was necessary for his family maintenance. He forgot all about a worldly life filled with sense gratification. He was exceedingly fond of devotional service to the Supreme Lord and so spent most of his time worshiping and offering prayers.

One day, as he was standing in a market selling his cloth, a devotee approached him and said, “Please give me some cloth, I have nothing to wear.” Śrī Kabīradāsa gave him half of a piece of cloth he had in stock. The devotee said, “This is not sufficient.” Śrī Kabīradāsa solemnly replied, “If you would like to take my whole stock of cloth then you can take it all.”

Meanwhile, Śrī Kabīradāsa’s wife, mother, son, and daughter were eagerly waiting for him at home. There was a scarcity of food in

the house and so all of the family members were hungry. Śrī Kabīradāsa understood that everyone at home was hungry, and that there would be no use in going home empty-handed. He was roaming around in the market with no money to buy food for his family members because he had given his entire stock of cloth in charity.

The Supreme Lord lives in the hearts of everyone, and He is an ocean of mercy. When the Lord saw the family members of Śrī Kabīradāsa hungry and distressed, in consideration of the sincere devotion of his devotee, Śrī Kabīradāsa, He also became anxious. Three days had passed without Śrī Kabīradāsa returning home when the Supreme Lord, having assumed the form of a businessman, arrived at the house with a bullock cart filled with food.

The Lord kept everything at Śrī Kabīradāsa's house and told the family members to utilize as much as they wanted. However, Śrī Kabīradāsa's mother was afraid that one of the king's constable's might see so much food and thus think that they were a family of thieves and arrest them. She also considered how her son never took anything from anyone and so these things must have come by mistake, belonging to some other Kabīra.

When Śrī Kabīradāsa had not returned home even after three days, some persons went and found him and brought him home. When Śrī Kabīradāsa returned home and heard that a businessman had come and delivered a huge quantity of food grains,

he immediately understood that it was the Supreme Lord who had come after seeing his distress and that of his family. By thus experiencing the causless mercy of Lord Rāmacandra, Śrī Kabīradāsa felt jubilant within his heart. He then called for all the saintly persons in the vicinity and distributed the food grains to them. He stopped weaving cloth because there was no economic necessity, and his heart was filled with transcendental happiness.

However, the local *brāhmaṇas* became envious and angry. They rushed to Śrī Kabīradāsa's house and said, "You received so much wealth but you did not share it with us? Instead, you called all the śudras and gave them everything. Now you must either give us some wealth or leave this village."

Śrī Kabīradāsa humbly replied, "Sirs, why should I go to another place? Should I steal from others so that I can give you some wealth? I have not stolen anything from anyone, nor did I plunder anyone in the street. I simply chant the transcendental glories of the Supreme Lord and remain absorbed in that way."

The *brāhmaṇas* said, "You have honored saintly persons by giving them food grains and wealth, and you have insulted us by not giving us anything. Now, if you give us food and wealth then both of us will be able to live comfortably."

Śrī Kabīradāsa replied, "Now I have nothing in my house. Go and see for yourself. If you still don't believe me then you can sit here while I go to the wholesale vegetable market.

Whatever I can get, I will give you.” In this way Śrī Kabīradāsajī was able to pacify the envious and angry *brāhmaṇas*. He went to the vegetable market and hid himself there, hoping to avoid further trouble.

In his absence, the Supreme Lord assumed the form of Śrī Kabīradāsa and arrived at his house, bearing great wealth. The Lord respectfully distributed the wealth among the *brāhmaṇas* so that everyone was pleased. In this way the Supreme Lord spread the effulgent glories of His devotee all over the world.

After satisfying the *brāhmaṇas*, the Supreme Lord assumed the form of a *brāhmaṇa* and went to where Śrī Kabīradāsa was hiding. He asked, “Why are you staying here? Why are you suffering from hunger? Go to the house of Kabīra. Whoever goes there is getting two-and-a-half kilos of rice. Do not delay any further. Go there quicky.”

Śrī Kabīradāsa quickly returned home, where he became filled with ecstatic love while hearing about all that had happened. He became overwhelmed while relishing the newer and newer pastimes and opulence displayed by the Supreme Lord. Since he was a very humble devotee, he did not like the prestige that these pastimes brought to him. In order to reduce his enhanced prestige, Śrī Kabīradāsa thought of various means to accomplish this.

One day, he called a prostitute to his house. It appeared that he had given up his *bhajana* and had become attached to gross sense gratification. But the real fact was

that he enacted such pastimes so that fewer people would come to his house in the hopes that their material desires would be fulfilled.

Ordinary people would come to take Śrī Kabīradāsa’s blessings, thinking that by doing so their material desires would be fulfilled. Śrī Kabīradāsa pretended to act sinfully so that people would avoid him. In this way he avoided impediments to his *bhajana*.

Seeing Śrī Kabīradāsa with a prostitute, saintly persons became fearful and perplexed, but evil-minded people became happy. Śrī Kabīradāsa understood the minds of both groups. To remove the fear and confusion from the minds of the devotees, Śrī Kabīradāsa took the prostitute and went to the royal assembly of the king of Kāśī. Although the king was a disciple of Śrī Kabīradāsa, he did not show him any respect. Śrī Kabīradāsa sat down there and began to meditate on the Supreme Lord.

After awhile, Śrī Kabīradāsa exhibited a wonderful pastime. First, he stood up and poured some water from his water pot. Seeing this, the king became a little concerned and asked, “What you have done? Why did you pour water?”

Śrī Kabīradāsa replied, “In Jagannātha Purī, the cook of Lord Jagannātha was carrying the offering plate to the temple and his feet were about to be burnt and so I poured the water to cool his feet and thus give him protection.”

Hearing this, everyone was astonished. The king sent some people to Jagannātha

Purī to find out whether such an incident had occurred. When they returned, they confirmed that whatever Śrī Kabīradāsa had said was true.

Just to bewilder people, Śrī Kabīradāsa kept the prostitute for some time and then sent her back home. When the king heard about this, he said to his queen, "What Śrī Kabīradāsa has said was correct. He kindly came to my royal assembly, but I insulted him. Therefore I feel depressed. What should I do to counteract this offence?"

The queen suggested, "Take shelter of him and then everything will be alright." Thereafter, the king took a bundle of grass on his head and tied an axe around his neck. With great humility, the king, along with the queen, went and took shelter of Śrī Kabīradāsa. In this way, both the king and the queen were relieved of their grief. They even walked through the main marketplace, considering themselves to be offenders and sinful.

When Śrī Kabīradāsa saw the king from a distance, he became overwhelmed by conflicting emotions. He quickly approached the king and took the bundle of grass from his head and the axe from his neck. Śrī Kabīradāsa was certainly satisfied to see the humble position taken by the king and queen. He assured them that he was not at all angry with them, and then he imparted to them instructions so that they soon felt at ease.

As Śrī Kabīradāsa's fame spread like a forest fire, the local *brāhmaṇas* became

more and more envious. During that time, the then emperor of India, Sikandara Loḍhī, came to Kāśī. The wicked *brāhmaṇas* again and again spoke to Śrī Kabīradāsa's mother so that eventually she took their side. They then went to Sikandara Loḍhī's royal court. All of them together complained to the king about Śrī Kabīradāsa, saying, "This Kabīradāsa has spoiled the whole village. Everyone is unhappy with his conduct. He was born a Muslim, but he has become a Hindu *bābājī*. He does not believe in any religion but simply makes a show of spirituality to fool the innocent public."

The king immediately ordered, "Go arrest him and bring him to me. I will check what kind of cheater he is. My administration is very strong. I will arrest him and put him behind bars for his whole life and thereby smash all his stubbornness, hypocrisy, and pride."

Having received this order, the constables arrested Śrī Kabīradāsa and brought him before the king in the royal court. A minister told Śrī Kabīradāsa, "This is the king sitting in front of you and so you must salute him."

Śrī Kabīradāsa replied, "I do not salute anyone other than Lord Śrī Rāma. I know for certain that at a time of danger, only the lotus feet of Śrī Rāma are a real shelter. I am fully fixed in that conviction with firm determination."

After hearing these words of Śrī Kabīradāsa, the king considered him to be very proud. In order to kill him, the king had his hands and legs shackled and then

had him thrown into the Gaṅgā. But still, Śrī Kabīradāsa remained alive. No one could understand what happened to the iron shackles when he came out of the water and stood on the shore. Because he did not drown, people thought that he must know some mystic *mantras* or magic tricks.

Thereafter, by the order of the king, Śrī Kabīradāsa was placed on a heap of dry wood which was then set on fire. At that time something truly amazing happened. All the dry wood was burnt to ashes but Śrī Kabīradāsa's body shone like molten gold. When everyone saw this, the king's men were confounded. And yet even though all of their attempts to kill Śrī Kabīradāsa failed, they did not come to their senses and surrender to him. They brought a mad elephant so that it could trample Śrī Kabīradāsa under its feet. And yet, even though it was goaded very strongly, the elephant refused to move even an inch. Instead, the elephant finally ran away in the opposite direction. The reason why the elephant did not come to trample Śrī Kabīradāsa was that Lord Śrī Rāma had personally come in the form of a lion and sat in front of him. That is why the elephant fearfully ran away.

Finally, after witnessing the wonderful influence of Śrī Kabīradāsa, King Sikandara Loḍhī jumped off his throne and fell at his feet. All the godless people were thus defeated in their attempt to defame Śrī Kabīradāsa.

The king folded his hands and prayed, "Kindly save me from the wrath of God." Śrī

Kabīradāsa replied, "Never disturb or torture saintly persons." The King said, "O lord, I will give you whatever you want. Take any village, any province, or any of the comforts of life." Śrī Kabīradāsa humbly replied, "I only want the mercy of Lord Rāmacandra. That is why I chant His holy names twenty-four hours a day. I have nothing to do with material wealth and opulence. Attachment for material opulence is a great hinderance to spiritual development."

After being honored by the king, Śrī Kabīradāsa returned home. Since he became victorious in this way, many saintly persons came to meet him. According to the commentator, Śrī Priyādāsa, only a devotee of the Lord is truly victorious, and only his glories and activities are worthy of praise.

However, after the victory of Śrī Kabīradāsa, the envious *brāhmaṇas* felt great shame. They soon hatched another plan. In order to defeat Śrī Kabīradāsa by having him cursed by saintly persons, four of the *brāhmaṇas* shaved their heads. They put on *tilaka* and *tulasī* neck beads, and dressed themselves as devotees. The four "devotees" departed in the four directions. They went to even far away places and invited all kinds of saintly persons, saying, "Please come to Śrī Kabīradāsa's house, for he has arranged a grand feast. Cloth and *dakṣiṇā* will be given to everyone."

On the appointed day, all kinds of saintly persons arrived from the four directions at Śrī Kabīradāsa's house. Śrī Kabīradāsa had left home and was hiding in a distant place.

In order to keep the honor of His devotee intact, the Lord personally appeared in the form of Śrī Kabīradāsa. The Supreme Lord is always prepared to protect His devotees. He assumed many forms of Śrī Kabīradāsa throughout the four directions and greeted all the invited saintly persons. The Lord arranged for the distribution of *prasāda* and so all the saintly persons sat in rows.

Meanwhile, the real Kabīradāsa also came there and joined in the festivities. The Supreme Lord fed everyone to their full satisfaction and gave them charity as well. The Lord also satisfied Śrī Kabīradāsa in the same manner.

Once, to bewilder Śrī Kabīradāsa, a beautifully dressed Apsarā from the heavenly planets came to his house. However, when she saw Śrī Kabīradāsa's firm devotion for the Lord, she turned back.

Once, the Lord manifested His four-armed form before Śrī Kabīradāsa. Seeing the Lord's wonderful form, Śrī Kabīradāsa considered that the use of his eyes had become successful. Śrī Kabīradāsa was such a fortunate and exalted devotee. The Supreme Lord placed His lotus hands on Śrī Kabīradāsa's head and said, "You are glorious! Your intelligence is fixed upon chanting My holy names and meditating upon My forms. You can live in this world for as long as you desire while constantly singing about My transcendental qualities. At the end of this life, you will return to Vaikuṇṭha in your present body."

Śrī Kabīradāsa went to Magahara, where

he exhibited the wonderful prowess of devotional service to the Supreme Lord. Indeed, he preached devotional service everywhere. At the very end of his life, he brought a great quantity of flowers, spread them on the floor, and lay upon them. In this way he returned to the spiritual world to rejoin the Supreme Lord. He was such a powerful saintly devotee.

❀ Text 61 ❀

Hearing about the influence of the exalted devotee, Śrī Pīpāpratāpa, is beneficial and life-saving, like ghee, for all the people of the entire world. He never had material desires, for he did not belong to this illusory world, but was a soul descended from the transcendental realm. In the beginning he was a devotee of goddess Durgā. With a desire for liberation from material existence, he meditated upon the goddess.

The goddess appeared before Śrī Pīpāpratāpa and spoke truthfully, saying, "I am not capable of giving you liberation from material existence. Only the Supreme Personality of Godhead is capable of granting this freedom. Therefore you should take shelter of Him. This is the verdict of all scriptures and saintly persons."

By the order of goddess Durgā, Pīpāpratāpa took shelter of ācārya Śrī Rāmānanda and soon became a most elevated devotee of the Lord. By the mercy of his spiritual master, and by the influence of devotional service,

he became endowed with many sublime qualities. He was like a jeweled necklace around the necks of the devotees. By seeing his method of worship of the Lord, and his service to the devotees, all the Vaiṣṇavas felt greatly satisfied. By his influence, he benefited the people of the entire world. The proof of this is that he even instructed a ferocious lion who was accustomed to killing people. He made the lion his disciple, thus transforming it into a non-violent and humble creature.

❀ Śrī Pīpā ❀

There is a massive fort in the city of Gagraungada in Rajasthan, where a king named Pīpā once lived. He was a devotee of goddess Durgā. Once, a group of saintly persons came to his city. The king greeted the devotees and said, "Every day the goddess is offered a huge quantity of foodstuff. Everyone honors her *prasāda* and so you should also honor the Devī's *prasāda* today.

The devotees replied, "We have a Deity of the Lord with us, and we only accept His *prasāda* after offering Him foodstuffs. We do not partake of any *prasāda* from the demigods."

The king gave them some grains and vegetables. The devotees respectfully accepted whatever the king offered. They cooked for the Lord and offered the food to Him, praying, "O Lord, please transform the mentality of the king and convert him into

Your devotee."

That night, when the king was sleeping, he had a frightening dream. He saw that a fierce-looking ghost had grabbed him and then had thrown him onto the ground. Seeing this, the king cried out in great fear. The next morning, when the king got up from his bed, he contemplated the dream and understood that the ghost was that of one of the animals he had sacrificed before the goddess. From this realization, detachment from this world began to manifest in his heart. Indeed, he came to see the entire world as no better than straw in the street. Seeing the king's change of heart and his devotion for the Supreme Lord, the goddess became anxious.

Being detached from material opulence and sense gratification, the king asked the goddess how he could become liberated from the clutches of *māyā* and attain the shelter of the Supreme Lord. She truthfully instructed him for his benefit, saying, "Go to Kāśī and take shelter of Śrī Rāmānanda Svāmī. Accept him as your spiritual master, and by following the path instructed by him, you will certainly attain the Supreme Lord."

Being thus ordered by the goddess, the king departed for Kāśī. Because he loudly chanted the holy names of the Lord, and because he left home, giving up his responsibilities, people thought that he had become mad. Being very eager to have the *darśana* of his spiritual master, Śrī Pīpā finally arrived at an āśrama where there was continuous chanting of the holy names of the Lord and narrations of His transcendental pastimes and qualities.

As the king was about to enter the *maṭha*, the guard stopped him, saying “No one can go inside without the permission of the ācārya. Wait here and I will go and ask him. Kindly tell me your name.”

Pīpā said, “I am the King of Gagraungada.” Thereafter, to test the king, Śrī Svāmījī gave this message to the guard: “We are renounced persons. What do we have to do with kings?” When Pīpā received this message, he gave up his dress as a king in a mood of complete surrender. The king again sent the guard to request Śrī Svāmījī for permission to enter, but again, just to remove his attachment for the body, the ācārya sent this message: “Tell him to jump in a well.” Pīpā was very happy to receive this order, and he was actually prepared to jump into a well but Śrī Svāmījī’s servants caught hold of him and saved his life. Seeing Pīpā’s firm determination, Śrī Svāmījī became very satisfied and gave him his *darśana*. In this way Śrī Pīpājī got a new lease on life.

Śrī Rāmānanda Svāmī gave initiation to Pīpā and showed him special mercy. By the mercy of his spiritual master, Pīpā firmly established devotion to the Supreme Lord within his heart. Śrī Svāmī instructed, “Go back to your capital, Gagraungada, and render service to the saintly persons residing there. After about a year we will come to your palace if we hear that you have been serving the devotees nicely, that the devotees are satisfied with you, and that you take pleasure from performing this service.”

Thus Pīpā returned home and began

serving the devotees nicely as he was ordered by his spiritual master. He had great faith in and love for the devotees. When almost a year had passed, he wrote a letter to his spiritual master, saying, “Please have mercy on your servant. Kindly visit my palace.”

After receiving this invitation, Śrī Svāmī took about forty of his dear disciples and departed for Gagraungada. During his stay, Śrī Svāmī became very satisfied by seeing Pīpā’s firm faith and devotional mood.

As Śrī Rāmānanda Svāmī approached the fort, along with his disciples and servants, headed by Kabīradāsa, Raidāsa, and others, Pīpā came out of his palace to greet him, taking with him a palanquin. He offered his obeisances to his spiritual master and the other devotees by chanting appropriate *mantras*. He enthusiastically distributed many gold coins to the devotees and then escorted them into the royal palace. No one could adequately describe how Śrī Pīpā served the devotees, and how he fed them sumptuous foodstuffs.

After seeing Pīpā’s devotion and loving service to the devotees and the Supreme Lord, Śrī Svāmī said, “If you so desire, you can stay at home and serve the Lord. Otherwise, you can perform *bhajana* as a renounced person. Both are equally good for you.”

Having firm faith in the words of his spiritual master, Pīpā fell at his feet and prayed, “Please eternally keep me as a servant at your lotus feet.”

Śrī Pīpājī was prepared to give up everything

so that he could go with his spiritual master. When Śrī Pīpā thus prepared to depart so that he could remain with Śrī Svāmī, all of his twenty queens were prepared to accompany him. Śrī Pīpā tried to dissuade them in various ways, and he even tried frightening them, but none agreed to stay at home without their husband.

Śrī Pīpā then said, “If you wish to come with me and not remain at home then you must renounce your opulent dress and valuable ornaments.” The queens were unwilling to do this and so they began to cry.

Only one of them, the youngest of all the queens, named Sītāsahacarī, was ready to follow Śrī Pīpā’s order. She took off her royal attire, including all of her ornaments. She did not feel the least bit shy to put on the dress of a saintly woman. The king then ordered her to change to a more simple dress and give up her remaining few ornaments. She was prepared to do this but Śrī Svāmī, feeling compassionate toward her, instructed Śrī Pīpā to allow his youngest queen to follow with him without further conditions.

Still, Śrī Pīpā had no interest in taking his queen with him. Even though Śrī Svāmī requested him again and again, Śrī Pīpājī refused, saying, “I have no affection for Sītāsahacarī. I do not want to take her with me. If you have genuinely shown me your mercy then kindly arrange for her to go with someone else.”

Finally, when his spiritual master reminded him that it is not good to reject one’s chaste wife, Śrī Pīpā caught hold of Sahacarī’s hand

and decided to allow her to accompany him. In an attempt to stop the king from leaving his palace, all the other queens gave a *brāhmaṇa* wealth in the hopes that he could do something. The *brāhmaṇa* tried to stop the king, but the king described to him his great determination to advance in spiritual life. Still, the *brāhmaṇa* did not relent in his entreaties. Finally, when the *brāhmaṇa* saw the king’s unfailing determination, he drank poison and gave up his life. Śrī Svāmī revived the *brāhmaṇa* and sent him and the queens back to the palace.

After a great deal of inconvenience, Śrī Svāmī and his entourage finally arrived at Dvārakā Purī. For some time all of them resided there quite happily. When Śrī Svāmī decided to go to Kāśī with his disciples, Śrī Pīpā asked if he could remain at Dvārakā for some time. As he resided there, Śrī Pīpā attained such great attachment to the Lord that he became practically mad in separation. After seeing the transcendental beauty of Dvārakā, he jumped into the ocean.

After Śrī Pīpā and his queen had jumped into the ocean, Śrī Kṛṣṇa sent His servants to summon them. These servants went and respectfully brought the king and queen. Śrī Kṛṣṇa came out of His palace to meet Śrī Pīpā and his queen, who then continued to happily reside at Dvārakā for another week. While there, Śrī Pīpā saw the Lord’s dealings with His queens in sixteen thousand one hundred and eight palaces. Who can describe the happiness Śrī Pīpā experienced at Dvārakā? After about a week, Śrī Kṛṣṇa ordered Śrī

Pīpā to go from the transcendental Dvārakā and reside at the Dvārakā seen by mundane senses. Still, Śrī Pīpā did not want to leave the Lord.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa then instructed, “This form of Mine which you are seeing will also be visible to you in the Dvārakā seen through blunt material senses. You will continue to drink the nectar of My beautiful transcendental form. The more you relish the nectar of that vision, the more you will forget the pain of separation from Me. On the other hand, if you don’t go to the mundane-perceived Dvārakā, then the taint that “A devotee jumped into the ocean and died” will remain. Therefore you should go from here and remove the stain of this misfortune which is believed by the people in general.”

After hearing this, Śrī Pīpā agreed to leave the Lord after receiving the His conchshell and disc in the form of a stamp to make an imprint on the body. The Supreme Lord comes under the control of the devotees’ love for Him. The Lord escorted Śrī Pīpā and Sītāsahacarī to the seashore and then turned back. At this time, the Lord became overwhelmed by feelings of separation from His dear devotee.

When Śrī Pīpā and his wife emerged from the sea, people saw something wonderful. The clothing of both of them was completely dry. All those who saw him jump into the ocean recognized him and fell at his feet. Śrī Pīpā marked everybody’s body with the imprint of the conchshell and *cakra* given

by the Lord. He told the *pūjārīs* there that whoever visits Dvārakā should have his body marked with the imprint of the conchshell and disc. By doing this, the pilgrims’ sinful reactions will be destroyed, for that was the order of the Lord.

Every day, many people gathered to have the *darśana* of Śrī Pīpā. His wife said to him, “Now we should go somewhere else because here there are so many impediments to our performance of *bhajana*.” Thus both of them left Dvārakā. After they had traveled some distance, they met some Pathāna Muslims who kidnapped Sītāsahacarī. And yet, the Supreme Lord immediately appeared there and, after killing those sinful persons, brought Sītāsahacarī back. In this way the Lord protected His devotees and also gave them His *darśana*.

Śrī Pīpā then said to his queen, “We have to face so many difficulties and meet with so much danger and so it would be better for you to return home, where you can live comfortably and without fear.”

But Śrī Sītāsahacarī replied, “It is Lord Hari who removes all fearful conditions. He is our protector.” Śrī Pīpā said, “I was simply testing you. That is why I spoke as I did. Had your faith in the Lord not been strong then why would He personally come to give you protection? I know very well about your strong faith and conviction. You set a wonderful example for others. I am very happy to hear your words, which display your faith in the Lord.”

Thereafter, the king and queen continued

their journey, and while going, they had an encounter with a lion. This lion lived in the forest and had killed many travelers so that most people avoided that path. As soon as that lion would smell a human being, it would come running and attack him. However, when the lion saw Śrī Pīpā, its heart became purified. It gently approached Śrī Pīpā and sat down by his side. Śrī Pīpājī made the lion his disciple and instructed it to act as a Vaiṣṇava and not be envious of anyone.

After this incident, Śrī Pīpā continued walking and arrived at a village. There he had the *darśana* of the Supreme Lord who lies on the bed of Ananta-śeṣa. He found some dry bamboo in a shop and transformed the sticks into green bamboo and offered them to the Lord. From there, Śrī Pīpā went to the place of a great devotee named Śrī Cidhara.

Cidhara and his wife were pleased that the great devotee Śrī Pīpā had come to their house along with his wife. They respectfully greeted their guests but due to dire poverty there was nothing to feed them. Finding no alternative, Cidhara's wife gave her last dress to her husband, who then went to the market and sold it. With that money he bought some grains and vegetables and returned home. He requested Śrī Pīpā to cook and then offer the food to the Lord. Because she had no clothes to wear, Śrī Cidhara hid his wife in a storeroom.

Śrī Sītāśahacarī cooked the meal, which was then offered to the Lord. Śrī Pīpā asked Śrī Cidhara, "Where is your devotee wife?

Kindly call her. We will all sit together and take *prasāda*."

Cidhara replied, "You please eat first and she will take the remnants. She likes to have the remnants of exalted devotees." Śrī Pīpā then told his wife to go and bring Cidhara's wife so that they could all honor *prasāda* together. When she opened the door to the storeroom, she saw Cidhara's wife sitting without any clothes on.

Sītāśahacarī inquired, "Please tell me, what happened? Why you are like this?" Cidhara's wife replied, "We like to serve the devotees with love and devotion. We pass our lives in this way. Whenever devotees of the Lord come to our house, we take great pleasure in greeting them, seeing them, and hearing from them. Considering the happiness we receive from the association of devotees, whether this perishable body is covered or uncovered makes no difference."

When she heard this, Sītāśahacarī considered it to be very rare to find a devotee possessing such transcendental love and devotion. She thought, "Although we consider ourselves to be devotees, these devotees are actually exalted and their service attitude is unique."

Sītāśahacarī tore her cloth and gave half to Cidhara's wife. Thus everyone was able to sit down together and honor *prasāda*. This unusual incident which touches everyone's heart was narrated to Śrī Pīpā by his queen, Sītāśahacarī, as they prepared to sleep that night.

Being impressed by their service attitude,

Sītāśahacarī said to Śrī Cidhara's wife, "It seems to me that our duty is to render service to the devotees. For this purpose, I will adopt the profession of a prostitute."

Having come to this decision, Śrī Pīpā and his wife went and sat down in the grain market. Many men were attracted by the beauty of Sītāśahacarī and so they gathered around her. Although they looked at her with lusty intentions, they quickly became purified. People asked Śrī Sītāśahacarī, "Who are you? Who is this gentleman with you?" She replied, "I am a prostitute, and we have no place to live."

Everyone was surprised to hear this and simply stood staring at the couple. But there were some people who had seen them before at Dvārakā and recognized that they were the great devotee Śrī Pīpā and his wife, Sītāśahacarī. These people went and brought food grains, cloth, and gold coins and placed the offerings before them. Śrī Pīpā sent all these things to Śrī Cidhara, who then utilized everything in the service of the *brāhmaṇas* and devotees.

After bidding farewell to the devotee, Cidhara, Śrī Pīpā and his wife went to another village, named Toṇḍe. On the way, whenever they could not find a devotee's house, they would fast. If they happened to find devotees, they would take *prasāda* with them.

Thereafter, they built a cottage outside the village of Toṇḍe and began residing there. One day, as Śrī Pīpā went to take bath, he happened to find some pitchers

filled with gold coins. He ignored the wealth and returned home. At night, he informed Sītāśahacarī that he had found pitchers of gold coins in the lake but had left them there. She said, "Don't go again to that lake to take bath. Go to another lake."

By the will of Providence, some thieves heard this conversation. They quickly went to that lake and saw some pitchers filled with poisonous snakes. The thieves thought that Śrī Pīpā and his wife had spoken in this way just to have them bitten by the snakes. In order to take revenge, the thieves took those pitchers and threw them on the roof of Śrī Pīpā's cottage and ran away.

When Śrī Pīpā went out to see what had happened, to his astonishment he found many gold coins sent by the Supreme Lord for the service of the devotees. There were seven hundred and twenty gold coins, and each coin weighed about fifty grams. Śrī Pīpā considered wealth to be the root cause of all kinds of unwanted desires and so he made sure that he carefully utilized the coins properly.

Thereafter, anyone who came to his door was sumptuously fed. He invited many devotees from various places and fed them *prasāda* and gave them *dakṣiṇa*. In this way, countless devotees came and had *prasāda* at his place. Within three days, Śrī Pīpā spent all his wealth by feeding saintly persons and the poor. When the local king, Sūryasen, heard about his glorious charity, he came to see him, and he became very satisfied by witnessing his behavior. The king humbly

requested Śrī Pīpā to accept him as his disciple.

Śrī Pīpā replied, "First you must give up all material desires and become detached from a life of sense gratification. It is useless to give initiation to one who is materially attached."

The King appealed to him, saying, "I will follow whatever you order me to do. Please have mercy upon me." Śrī Pīpā instructed the king, saying, "If you agree to carry out my orders then surrender all your wealth and queens to me." The King offered his entire kingdom, including his queens, at the feet of Śrī Pīpā. In this way Śrī Pīpā tested the king and finally gave him *mantra* initiation.

Śrī Pīpā returned all the wealth and queens to the king while instructing him, saying, "The kingdom and queens still belong to me and so give up all attachment for them. By my order, simply maintain and protect them."

Śrī Pīpā ordered the queens to regularly render service to saintly persons. Thereafter, the king humbly offered a horse and much wealth to his spiritual master for the service of the Supreme Lord and the devotees. Śrī Pīpā only accepted a portion of the wealth and returned the rest to the king.

According to the instructions of his spiritual master, the king gave up his false pride and treated all living entities as if they were superior to him. Seeing this, the king's brothers became very envious of Śrī Pīpā, but they could not say anything to that greatly powerful and saintly devotee.

Once, a trader came to the village of Tonḍe to buy bulls. The king's brothers misguided them, saying, "The devotee, Pīpā, is a very big trader of bulls. He has many strong bulls and so you should go to him and conduct your business."

Being so advised by the king's brothers, the trader went to Śrī Pīpā, took out money from his bag, and said, "I have come to purchase some bulls. Kindly sell me some bulls that are very robust."

Śrī Pīpā replied, "You can have as many bulls as you like, but today they are not here, for they were sent to the field for grazing. Come here tomorrow at noon and take your bulls. The businessman left the money with Śrī Pīpā and departed. The next day, Śrī Pīpā invited many devotees and held a grand festival, spending all of the trader's money. The trader arrived at the appointed time and said, "Where are the bulls?"

At that time, saintly persons were sitting in lines, having their meals. Śrī Pīpā gestured at them and said, "These are my bulls. I do business with them. Take as many as you want."

By this time the businessman's mind had become purified by the association of the devotees. He also felt devotion towards the almighty Lord. The trader quickly went to the market and brought cloth for all the devotees.

One day, Śrī Pīpā went to take bath in a lake, riding on his horse. He left the horse on the shore of the lake and entered the water to take his bath. Some wicked thieves came

there and stole the horse, and yet, when Śrī Pīpā came back after taking his bath, his horse was standing there as before. As usual, he rode the horse back to his āśrama. When the thieves saw what had happened, they became afraid and returned the horse. Later on, they gave up their sinful lives and became Śrī Pīpā's disciples.

One day, the devotees staying at Śrī Pīpā's āśrama wanted to have yogurt. They asked Śrī Pīpā to arrange for some yogurt and offer it to Lord Rāmacandra. Just then a cowherd woman passed by the āśrama, selling yogurt. From this it was understood that the Supreme Lord fulfills the desires of His devotees. When Śrī Pīpā inquired about the price of the yogurt, the cowherd woman said, "It is three ānās." However, at that time Śrī Pīpā had no money with him and so he told her, "Give me the yogurt, but I don't have the money just now. Whatever we receive as donations today, we will give to you. And if nothing comes, then your yogurt will be accepted as a gift."

The cowherd woman agreed and went away. The yogurt was offered to the Lord, and all the devotees happily drank it after mixing it with sugar. At that time a disciple of Śrī Pīpā arrived there and gave him a pearl necklace and lot of wealth in charity. As promised, Śrī Pīpā gave everything to the cowherd woman. This shows the extent of a devotee's truthfulness. Whatever a devotee says, he does. The poor cowherd lady was afraid to take so much wealth, thinking that if the king would come to know of it, he

would confiscate it. She brought the wealth home, keeping some for herself, while the rest she spent for the service of the Supreme Lord and His devotees. Later on she became a disciple of Śrī Pīpā.

There once lived a *brāhmaṇa* who was great devotee of goddess Durgā. Once, he arranged for a huge festival and feast. He invited all the people of the village to the feast and everybody readily accepted. However, Pīpā refused to attend. Understanding this, the *brāhmaṇa* approached Pīpā and, after offering his obeisances, fervently implored him to come. However, the great devotee, Pīpā, said, "I have nothing to do with a place where there is no offering of food to Their Lordships Sītā-Rāma. I cannot go to such a place, nor can I eat there."

Finally, however, after seeing the *brāhmaṇa*'s humility, Pīpā said, "If you bring here whatever foodstuffs you have prepared, I can offer them to the Supreme Lord and then take *prasāda*."

The *brāhmaṇa* agreed to this arrangement and so Pīpā also honored the *prasāda*. After feeding everyone, when the *brāhmaṇa* went to sleep that night, he had a dream. In his dream, the goddess appeared before him and said, "You had arranged for such a grand feast, but I did not get anything to eat. I am very hungry!"

The *brāhmaṇa* replied, "Why?"

The goddess said, "When Pīpā offered the food to the Lord, the Lord's associates drove me out of the temple. I am still shivering due to fear of them."

When the *brāhmaṇa* woke up, he thought, "If the goddess is so afraid, then how could she deliver and protect me? Now I will become a disciple of Pīpā."

Thus the *brāhmaṇa* became very anxious to go and see Pīpā and narrate to him the dream. The next morning, he went to Pīpā and told him everything, and became his disciple. Soon thereafter, other devotees of goddess Durgā from the village also became disciples of Pīpā. They became Vaiṣṇavas and began worshiping the Supreme Lord.

One day, a beautiful lady came, carrying a pitcher of oil on her head for selling. She loudly called out, "Come and take oil, come here and take oil."

Pīpā said to her, "You are loudly saying 'Take oil, take oil.' Why don't you sometimes chant Sītā-Rāma, Sītā-Rāma? If you do this, you will be greatly benefitted."

The lady angrily replied, "Only widows chant Sītā-Rāma, Sītā-Rāma, or when someone dies, people chant *rāma-nāma-satya-hai*, 'the name of Rāma is truth' while carrying the dead body to the crematorium. Therefore, why should I chant this?"

Having said this, when the woman was about to return home after selling the oil, her husband was knocked down by a heavy wooden door frame that fell upon him so that he immediately died. After returning home and seeing her dead husband, the woman cried pathetically and lamented profusely while saying, "O Rāma, O Rāma."

People accompanied her, along with the dead body, to the crematorium, and

while going, they passed the āśrama of Pīpā. The oil-selling woman was crying and chanting, "*Rāma nāma satya hai*." She then complained to everyone, saying that it was because of the curse of Pīpā that her husband had died. Everyone prayed to Pīpā and promised to chant the holy name of the Lord for remainder of their lives.

Pīpā then brought back to life the oil-seller's husband. She also became a great devotee of the Lord by chanting His holy names. Her husband and many others also became devotees of Supreme Lord.

Pīpā kept a buffalo at his āśrama which had been donated by a devotee. One night, some thieves came and stole the buffalo. Pīpā was awake, and while the thieves were leaving the āśrama, Pīpā took the buffalo's calf and ran behind them shouting, "Take the calf also. How can she give milk without her calf?"

Seeing Pīpā's liberal nature, the thieves were impressed and so they returned the buffalo and became his disciples, renouncing their thievery. Seeing that his *āśrama* was getting crowded as the days passed, Pīpā said to his wife, "There are so many disturbances to my *bhajana* here. Let us go to a solitary place in a forest so that we can chant the holy name of Rāma peacefully."

Thus it came to be that Pīpā and Sītāsahacārī left their āśrama and went to the forest to perform their *bhajana*. Then some passersby recognized him so that soon, the devotees requested him to return to the āśrama. At that time, a wealthy merchant

arrived there with a cart filled with grains and other wealth and donated it to Pīpā. Pīpā accepted everything and decided to return to the āśrama. However, on the way Pīpā met some dacoits and so he happily gave them the loaded cart. The dacoits departed, and after they had gone a little distance, Pīpā remembered that he had kept a purse filled with gold coins. Pīpā took the purse and ran after the dacoits, saying, "Wait; take these coins as well."

The dacoits were astonished to have received the coins in this manner. They inquired, "Who are you? Where do you live?"

Thus Pīpā revealed his identity, and when the dacoits understood who he was, they fell at his feet and begged for his forgiveness. They brought the cart to Pīpā's āśrama and became his disciples. They gave up their bad habits and became righteous. In this way Pīpā changed their lives and conduct.

One day, Pīpā received five invitations from five different villages to attend their festivals. He thought, "Let me go to all of them—each for a short period of time." In the meantime, a few devotees arrived at his āśrama and so Pīpā began happily serving them. "It is necessary to go if someone invites you with respect and love." Thinking like this, Pīpā expanded himself into five forms and visited all five places. He chanted and sang in all those places throughout the day and night, and then he gave up his bodies there so that his funeral ceremony was performed in those five villages.

In one of the villages, Pīpā had two female disciples who thought it wise to inform others of his demise. As they went here and there, they happened to see a group of people engaged in performing the funeral rituals. Then people from all the villages went to Pīpā's āśrama and saw him sitting in the midst of many devotees, chanting the holy names of the Lord. Upon seeing this miracle, everyone was convinced that Pīpā was not an ordinary man, but a supremely exalted personality.

One day, a group of devotees came to Pīpā's āśrama. Pīpā served them very nicely for a few days. Then, while leaving, the devotees said that they wanted to go to Dvāraka, but they had no money to pay for the journey. Pīpā went to a merchant and borrowed some money on the condition that he should not remind him of the debt. Pīpā assured the merchant that when he had the money, he would personally come and repay the amount with interest.

However, after some days, the merchant began demanding his money. Pīpā reminded him of the condition and assured him that he would pay the money without his asking. But the merchant was not satisfied and so he went to the court and demanded that his money be returned.

The judges asked Pīpā, "Why are you not paying your debt?"

Pīpā replied, "Let the merchant bring the loan document so that I can clear my debt. I am ready to pay whatever is stated in the document."

When the merchant brought the document from home and presented before the judges, the paper was blank. The judges decided to punish the merchant, saying that he had insulted a saintly person and thus should be ostracized from society. Hearing this, Pīpā said, “Do not punish him. I borrowed money from him simply for the service of the devotees, and the condition was that he would not demand repayment. Thus he has violated his promise by demanding payment and so, by the will of the Lord, his loan agreement has become blank.”

Being influenced by this miracle, a rich spectator repaid the entire amount. The merchant felt extremely sorry and took shelter of Pīpā.

The āśrama of Pīpā, who was always fond of serving devotees, was sometimes filled with food grains and sometimes devoid of food grains. Still, Pīpā was detached in all circumstances. One day, a huge amount of grains, money, and other things were offered so that the affairs of his āśrama was conducted very nicely and opulently.

However, Pīpā was not happy and so he decided to leave the āśrama and go elsewhere. He and his wife left Tonda village and arrived at a market place about one hundred sixty kilometers away. He sat down in that place, but the shopkeepers chastised him and pushed him away.

Pīpā told his wife, “Now I feel some peace in my life. Actually, honor and worship is like a disease, and this type of treatment is the only remedy.”

One day, as Pīpā was sitting in a place and happily chanting the holy names of the Lord, the sound of his *kīrtana* spread in all directions. A saintly person accompanied by hundreds of his disciples and followers came to see him. The bliss of the *kīrtana* increased due to the association of so many saintly persons.

In that place lived a *brāhmaṇa* who also came there and participated in the *saṅkīrtana*. After the *kīrtana* had ended, the *brāhmaṇa* offered his obeisances and prayed to Pīpā, saying, “I have unintentionally killed a cow. I have visited all the holy places and I have given so much charity but still people have ostracized me from society. I know that the Supreme Lord and his devotees are deliverers of the fallen souls. Kindly purify me of my sin.”

Śrī Pīpā replied, “You have participated in the chanting of the Lord’s holy names in the association of devotees so that you are certainly purified.”

The *brāhmaṇa* returned home and brought varieties of food for cooking to where Pīpā was staying. A feast was prepared as resounding *kīrtana* was chanted. The whole village came to see the fun. When they saw that the *brāhmaṇa* was sitting in the row of devotees to take his meal, they complained to Pīpā, saying, “We abandoned this man because of he had killed a cow and so how is it that you have accepted him in this assembly of saintly persons?”

Pīpā replied, “This *brāhmaṇa* has become purified simply by chanting the holy names

of the Lord in the association of devotees so that he is freed of all sinful reactions.”

Still, the people challenged this decision, saying, “We will accept him if Śrī Hanuān accepts food offerings from his hands.”

By the order of Pīpā, the *brāhmaṇa* took *bhoga* in his hands and offered it to Hanumān. By the influence of Pīpā, Hanuman actually accepted the offering and upon seeing this proof of his purity, all the people gained great faith in the association of devotees and devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

When Pīpā had left Tonda, King Sūryasena became anxious. He became so eager to have the *darśana* of Pīpā that he sent messengers with a letter, requesting him to return home. Utilizing his extraordinary mystic power, Pīpā instantly returned to Tonda while the messengers riding on their horses returned after a few days.

When Pīpā arrived at Tonda, the whole town became filled with joy. The king and his subject rushed to have his *darśana*. Indeed, the king gave much wealth in charity to Pīpā. At that time, a householder devotee arrived and prayed with folded hands, saying, “I have a daughter of marriageable age, but I do not have any money. How will I arrange for her marriage?”

Pīpā immediately and without hesitation gave that householder devotee all the wealth that he had received in charity so that he became exceedingly satisfied. Pīpā was a charitably disposed person who was fully detached from desires to possess wealth.

The character of Śrī Raṅga has already

been described. He was a disciple of Śrī Anantānandācārya and Pīpā’s nephew. Having an ardent desire to have the *darśana* of Pīpā, he sent to him twenty letters. However, by the arrangement of Providence, he could not meet him. Finally, with great humility, Śrī Raṅga wrote a letter and sent it to Pīpā through a reliable friend. After reading the letter and hearing about Śrī Raṅga’s humble nature from the mouth of the bearer, Pīpā felt compassion and therefore accepted his request and went to see him.

When Pīpājī arrived at his home, Śrī Raṅga was engaged in dressing his worshipable Lord within his mind. He decorated the Lord with an opulent crown and then offered Him a flower garland. However, because the garland was too short, it was getting stuck in the Lord’s crown so that it would not go around His neck. Thus Śrī Raṅga could not understand how to put a garland over the Lord’s head. Pīpājī said, “Simply untie the string and then the garland will easily go around the Lord’s neck.”

Śrī Raṅga did as he was told and then opened his eyes in great astonishment, looking around to see who it was that had told him how to offer the garland. Finally, he came out of his house and with great eagerness saw in front of him the effulgent, divine smiling face of Pīpā, who was standing before him.

Śrī Raṅga asked, “Who are you that is sitting here quietly? Kindly reveal your identity.”

Pīpā smilingly replied, “This is not the

proper way to inquire from a saintly person. If you wish to receive knowledge from a saintly person then you should follow the prescription given in Bhagavad-gītā 4.34: *tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā, upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*.

“One should approach a saintly person by offer obeisances and rendering service to him. Then with sincerity, one can inquire about the Absolute Truth from him because he has seen the truth. It is only with this attitude that one is qualified to receive instructions from saintly devotees.”

Hearing this, Śrī Rāṅga felt embarrassed, understanding that this person must be a learned self-realized soul. Therefore following the etiquette of Bhagavad-geṭ, he again inquired, but this time very submissively. Pīpā then revealed his name and place of residence, and upon hearing this, Śrī Rāṅga fell down at his feet, his long-cherished wish having been fulfilled.

Thereafter, Śrī Rāṅga folded his hands and humbly said, “O lord, I had a desire that when you would come, I would greet you while singing and playing the drum. But you have arrived at my doorstep without my having received any prior information. Kindly wait at the garden outside the city so that I can go there and escort you here.”

Pīpājī replied, “There is no need for that, for I have already arrived at your house.”

But Śrī Rāṅga said, “O Mahārāja, my desire will remain unfulfilled.”

Finally, Pīpā agreed and went to a garden

situated two miles from the house, and sat there. Śrī Rāṅga, along with musical instruments, devotees, and a palanquin, went there while singing and dancing in order to welcome him.

Pīpā said, “My spiritual master, Śrī Rāmānandācārya, sits on a palanquin and so how can I possibly do so? If you wish to please me then keep a picture of my spiritual master on the palanquin and I will walk behind it.”

This was done and thereafter, Pīpā stayed with Śrī Rāṅga for a month. By Pīpā’s association, the entire village of Dausa became devoted to Lord Śrī Rāma so that everyone began rendering devotional service to the Lord.

One day, while residing in Dausa at the residence of Śrī Rāṅga, as Pīpā and his friend were sitting on the shore of a lake, two women passed by selling cow dung cakes. Seeing them, Pīpā called them to his side but Śrī Rāṅga did not like this kind of behavior. He thought, “Why should a saintly person call women? It is the duty of a devotee not to even look at the face of another man’s wife.”

Pīpā understood the mentality of Rāṅga and explained to him that for one’s selfish interest it is improper to talk to, or look at, women, but there is no harm in talking to them for the sake of their spiritual enlightenment. This resolved the doubt of Śrī Rāṅga.

Thereafter, Pīpā preached to those ladies, saying, “It does not look good for you to sell cow dung after receiving the rare human

form of life. This body is meant for serving the Supreme Lord. You are wasting your jewel-like human birth, misusing it for the sake of insignificant cow dung. Why don't you make your life successful and glorious by dedicating it to the Supreme Lord? Your body, mind, and everything else belong to the Supreme Lord.

"You are eternal maidservants of the Supreme Lord. You are not the wives of worldly husbands. Therefore give up everything and become attached to the lotus feet of Śrī Śyāmasundara, the son of the King of Vraja and the beloved Lord of Śrī Rādhā."

Being instructed by Pīpā in this way, the two women became detached from worldly life and devoted to Lord Kṛṣṇa. They left home and made their residence in Dvārakā.

After taking leave from Śrī Raṅga, when Pīpā was approaching his village, Tonda, he saw a *brāhmaṇa* crying pathetically. Upon Pīpā inquired about the cause of his distress, the *brāhmaṇa* said, "My daughter is of marriageable age, but I have no money. I went to many householders but could not collect any wealth. Therefore I am worried about her."

Hearing these words, Pīpā became compassionate and so he immediately gave him whatever he had with him and said, "If you dress like a saintly person for some time, I am sure that you can collect much money and paraphernalia."

The *brāhmaṇa* agreed to Pīpā's proposal. Pīpā then brought him to his āśrama, had

his head shaved, and marked his body with *tilaka*. He gave him neck beads and had him seated on a raised platform while he sat down near his feet. When the King of Tonda, Sūryasena, came to have the *darśana* of Pīpā, he asked about the new devotee.

Pīpā said, "He is my spiritual master's godbrother. You are fortunate to have come here for his *darśana*."

Hearing this, the king became very happy and gave a huge amount of wealth and commodities in charity to the *brāhmaṇa*. When the king returned home, Pīpā folded his hands and said, "O Maharāja, please forgive me, for I made you shave your head. You can grow your hair again. Now you can go back home and arrange for your daughter's marriage by utilizing this wealth."

Seeing the influence of the Vaiṣṇava dress, the *brāhmaṇa* was astonished and had a change of heart. For the rest of his life, he never gave up the Vaiṣṇava dress, and he became indifferent to worldly life. He returned home and somehow or the other arranged for his daughter's marriage, and after giving all that he had to his daughter, he became a disciple of Pīpā. In this way he not only delivered himself, but also delivered many of his past and future family members.

Once, at Tonda, the devotees stayed up the entire night on Ekādaśī. Many devotees gathered and were devotedly singing the glories of the Supreme Lord. Pīpā was sitting in their midst, and he suddenly stood up and with his arms raised above his head began squeezing something. No one could

understand this strange behavior.

King Sūryasena very humbly asked about this and Pīpā replied, “There was a *kīrtana* performance at Dvārākā, and a huge lamp was burning in the assembly. Suddenly, due to negligence, the lamp started to fall over so that the cotton canopy became engulfed in flames. You saw my hands extend upwards because I hastily extinguished the fire from here.”

Upon hearing this, the king was certainly surprised, and just to find out if this were true, he sent one of his servants to Dvārākā. The man went to Dvārākā and saw with his own eyes that the canopy was being repaired. When asked about this, all the people said that if Pīpā had not been there then who knows what would have happened. It was Pīpā who saved everybody by putting out the fire in the burning canopy. After hearing from the eyewitnesses, the royal servant came back and narrated everything to the king. From that day onwards, the king’s faith in Pīpā greatly increased. Who can understand the glories of the pure devotees?

One day, as Pīpā was taking bath in a lake, a *brāhmaṇa* approached him while crying out, “My bull had died and so without it, my paddy fields will not be harvested and the crop spoiled. Please arrange for a bull so that I can harvest my field.”

Pīpā said, “There are no bulls at my place for me to give you. Moreover, I have no means by which I can purchase a bull for you.”

Still, the *brāhmaṇa* continued crying and

piteously lamenting. Meanwhile, a young boy from a *vaiṣya* family came there to give water to his bull. Pīpā took the bull from him and gave it to the *brāhmaṇa*. The young boy returned home crying and told everything to his father, who then went to King Sūryasen and complained about Pīpā. The king told him to go to Pīpā and request him to return his bull. The *vaiṣya* approached Pīpā and said, “O Mahārāja, why did you give my bull to the *brāhmaṇa*?”

Pīpā replied by giving nice instructions, saying, “My dear brother, giving charity is a pious activity and therefore glorious. Just consider how your bull was given to a *brāhmaṇa*. Charity given to a *brāhmaṇa* is never in vain because the *brāhmaṇas* are representatives of the Supreme Lord. Therefore you should not lament for your bull.”

But the man became very angry and shouted, “If you wanted to give charity, you should have given your own bull. If you did not have one then you could have bought one and given it in charity.”

Pīpā heard his words and simply laughed. However, when the matter became threatening, Pīpā said, “Why are you quarreling? First go home and see whether your bull is there or not. Your bull is at your house and so you are needlessly fighting with me.”

The *vaiṣya* quickly returned home and saw that his bull was tied to a pole in front of his house. This incident opened his eyes. Having witnessed Pīpā’s influence, he went and fell

at his feet, again and again begging pardon. Later on, he became became Pīpā's disciple.

Once there was a terrible famine in the country. All the subjects were suffering for want of food grains, water, and other eatables. King Sūryasena became perplexed about how to save his citizens from the onslaught of the famine. Finally, he went and took shelter of his spiritual master, Pīpā. Kind-hearted Pīpā assured the king that he would provide food grains, clothing, and other necessities to all of the citizens during the entire period of the famine.

With his divine vision, Pīpā discovered some wealth buried in the earth and so he arranged to take it out and distribute it freely to the people.

Such are the characteristics of the saintly devotee, Pīpā. The commentator on Śrī Bhaktamāla—Priyādāsa—says that the book has become voluminous because of the description of Pīpā's characteristics and so he has only briefly narrated the later pastimes. Pīpā's character is very sublime and inspiring.

Text 62

❀ Śrī Dhannā ❀

We appreciate the glorious service rendered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and his devotees by the most pious and praiseworthy devotee, Śrī Dhannā.

Once, when some Vaiṣṇavas arrived at his house, he fed them the wheat which had been kept as seeds for sowing in the field the next year. Then, out of fear of his parents, he ploughed the land even though he had no seeds to sow.

Then, when his neighbors praised him for his nice crop, he went to the field and became astonished to see the lush crops in his field, even though he did not sow any wheat seeds. Thus he understood the wonderful influence of serving saintly persons. People throughout the land were astonished after hearing about this incident. They said that seeds were sowed in one place and crops were produced somewhere else.

❀ Commentary ❀

The miracle with regards to Śrī Dhannā's crops is clearly described by Śrī Nābā in the above text. Now hear something else which took place when Śrī Dhannā was a young boy.

Once, a Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇa* named Śrī Trilocana came to his house. This devotee served his Deity very nicely and properly. While Śrī Trilocana was serving his Deity, Śrī Dhannā came and said, "Please allow me to also render service to the Deity. I also have great love and devotion for serving the Supreme Lord."

The *brāhmaṇa* gave him a round stone and warned him that he should worship the Lord with faith and devotion. The young boy, Śrī Dhannā, accepted the stone as his

worshipable Lord and touched it to his heart as if he had gotten a new life. He began to worship the Lord with devotion and love. Śrī Dhannā placed *chapatis* as an offering in front of the Lord, and after closing the curtain, he sat down to meditate while closing his eyes. After awhile, when he opened the curtain, he saw that the Lord had not taken even a piece of the *chapatis*. Because of this, Śrī Dhannā became fearful.

Śrī Dhannā fell down at the lotus feet of his Lord again and again, requesting Him to eat. Finally, he said, “My Lord, if You don’t eat then I will also not eat anything.”

Because the Lord did not accept the offering, Śrī Dhannā did not eat or drink anything. Finally, understanding that Śrī Dhannā’s heart was pure and honest, the Lord ate the *chapatis* that had been offered, and indeed, He relished them very much.

Śrī Dhannā would go to the forest every day for tending the cows. Sometimes he would offer foodstuffs to his Lord in the field and then take the remnants. Such are the loving exchanges between the Supreme Lord and His devotee.

One day, the Lord told Śrī Dhannā, “It is a rule that if someone accepts a favor from another person, he should do some service for that person in return. Therefore, tell me something that I can do for you.”

Even though Śrī Dhannā told Him not to this, the Supreme Lord would tend his cows every day. This is a fact and one should have complete faith in these narrations.

After about a year, the same *brāhmaṇa*,

Śrī Trilocana, came to Śrī Dhannā’s house and looked to see if his worship of the Lord was being properly carried out. When asked about this, Śrī Dhannā said, “The Supreme Lord has gone to the forest to tend the cows.”

The *brāhmaṇa* could not believe this because he not attained the direct *darśana* of the Lord, even though he had worshiped Him throughout his entire life. After hearing about the loving devotional service rendered by Śrī Dhannā to his Lord, the *brāhmaṇa* was satisfied and proud. Later on, at the request of the *brāhmaṇa*, Śrī Dhannā took him to the forest and showed him the beautiful Lord Śyāmasundara tending the cows. Having thus attained the *darśana* of the Lord, the *brāhmaṇa* felt that he had gotten a new lease on life. Indeed, the *brāhmaṇa* became very joyful while seeing the Lord in the midst of the cows so that tears of love flowed from his eyes. He considered himself most fortunate and decided to also please Lord Rāma, the husband of Sītā, by rendering service to Him with unalloyed love and devotion.

Later on, the Lord instructed Śrī Dhannā, saying, “I am most pleased by your natural devotion, but still, there is some discrepancy in your method of worship. Your only fault is that you have not yet accepted a spiritual master. Unless one takes initiation from a spiritual master and receives *mantras* and instructions from him, his devotion, knowledge, and detachment cannot mature. Therefore you should approach Rāmānandācārya and take initiation from him. Your devotional service has captured

My heart. I am very pleased by your devotion.”

Śrī Dhannā approached Śrī Svāmījī and became his disciple. After this, the Lord embraced Śrī Dhannā with great affection. Śrī Dhannā continued to worship his Lord while taking care of his household duties. The commentator says, “Whatever I have heard about the characteristics of Śrī Dhannā from the mouths of the devotees, I have described as it is.

❀ Text 63 ❀

❀ Śrī Sena ❀

It is well-known all over the country that the Supreme Lord favored His devotee, Śrī Sena. The Lord, who is always affectionate to His devotee, took the form of a barber and personally went to the royal palace with a mirror and razor and gave an oil massage to the king. When the king understood the internal meaning of this mystery, he became a disciple of Śrī Sena. Just as the mother always remains near her newly-born calf to give it protection, so the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, always remained with Śrī Sena for his benefit.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Sena was a resident of Bandahogarh in Madhya Pradesh, and was always fond

of rendering service to the Supreme Lord and His devotees. Indeed, his mind and intelligence were fixed in the service of the Lord and saintly devotees. Being pleased by his service, the Lord displayed the wonder of his service.

One day, after completing his daily worship and chanting of *mantras* pertaining to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Sena left for the royal palace to give an oil massage to the king. On the way he met some devotees and so he brought them to his house. While serving the devotees with love and devotion, he completely forgot about going to the king to render service. He had no fear whatsoever that if he were late, the king might become displeased and award him punishment.

However, the Lord, concerned that His devotee might not become the target of the king's wrath, assumed the form of Śrī Sena and went to the palace and served the king. The king was very satisfied by His service.

Meanwhile, after Śrī Sena became finished serving the saintly devotees, he also went to the king's palace. On the way, when Śrī Sena inquired about the king's oil massage from the royal servants, they told him, “You just gave the king his oil massage.”

Hearing this, Śrī Sena was astonished, but later on, when he realized that it was the causeless mercy of the Lord, his heart became filled with love for Him. Finally, when he approached him, the king was surprised to see him again and said, “Why did you come again?”

Śrī Sena felt ashamed and replied, “I am

very sorry. Some saintly persons came to my house and that is why I am late for your service.”

Understanding Śrī Sena’s exalted glories, the king immediately fell down at his feet to offer his obesciences, his heart saturated with love. He gave up the pride of being a king and possessing a kingdom and adopted the mood of servitorship to the Supreme Lord. The king became a disciple of Śrī Sena and thus tasted the mellows of pur devotional service. Indeed, he realized that service to the devotees and the Lord is the essence of life.

Both Śrī Sena and the king became great devotees of the Lord, and their descendents also were devoted to the Lord. It is a fact that if a person develops faith in the service of the devotees and the Lord then he will certainly attain the Lord’s mercy. Of this there is no doubt.

❀ Text 64 ❀

❀ Śrī Sukhānanda ❀

Śrī Sukhānanda’s hands were always ready to engage surrendered souls in the devotional service of the Lord, thus destroying their fear of material existence. Those hands were like an iron rod for chastising godless persons, and they were like a touchstone for converting sinful persons into honest gold-like saintly persons. By his songs, he would

merge himself and others into an ocean of divine happiness. He was very fond of singing songs in the *gaūrī raga*. The songs composed by him are as good as the *mantras* received from the spiritual master, and they are approved by all the scriptures.

The flow of love of God would constantly agitate his heart so that tears would glide down from his eyes like streams from a mountain. His speech was always decorated with descriptions of the unlimited names, qualities, and pastimes of the Supreme Lord. He was like the sun that caused the lotus flowers in the form of saintly persons to blossom. He was like a clear nectarean lake in which the lotus-like devotees gained respite.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Sukhānanda was an incarnation of Lord Śaṅkara. He was born in the village of Kiritpur, which was situated near Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh. His father was Śrī Tripurāri Bhaṭṭa, and his mother was Godāvarī-devī. He was born on the ninth day of the waxing moon in the month of Vaiśākha. His childhood name was Candrahari. Every day he would go with his mother to a temple to see the ārati ceremony and take *caraṇāmṛta*. From his birth his eyes were half-closed. It was not a physical deformity, but a symptom of yoga practice.

One day, when Śrī Sukhānanda was a child, as he was playing in a garden, a poisonous snake came and spread its hood over his

head. The people were frightened while seeing this. As everyone prayed to the snake to leave, it suddenly disappeared.

Within a short time, Śrī Sukhānanda became well-versed in all the scriptures. An astrologer said to his parents, "When your son reaches his eighteenth year, he will become detached from worldly life when he sees his reflection, either in a mirror or on the surface of water."

From that time onward, Śrī Sukhānanda's parents never let him go near water. Once, his grandfather was defeated in a scriptural debate and so he had to pay a certain amount of money to the winner, Śrī Raṅgarāja Dixit. Śrī Sukhānanda then defeated Śrī Raṅgarāja Dixit, thus freeing his grandfather, and other learned scholars who were his followers, from anxiety.

One day, Śrī Sukhānanda happened to see his face reflected in water. He immediately became indifferent to the ways of this world and so left home. His father then sent him a servant to act as his companion.

After leaving home, Śrī Sukhānanda received a divine order to go to Kāśī and take shelter of Śrī Rāmānandācārya. Then, while on his way to Kāśī, he met a *sannyāsi* named Śrī Rāmabhāratī. Together they arrived at Kāśī and took initiation from Rāmānandācārya into the chanting of a *mantra* of Śrī Rāma. From this time onward he became known as Śrī Sukhānanda.

Later on, Śrī Sukhānanda imparted many elevated instructions about the spiritual truth to Śrī Rāmabhāratī. By the order of his

spiritual master, he went to reside in a place known as Śrī Rāmasayyā at Citrakūṭa, where he performed his *bhajana* for many years.

Once, Śrī Sukhānanda saved a man who had illicit connections with a woman from the king's punishment. At first, the king did not care for Śrī Sukhānanda's plea for mercy, but then Hanumān appeared and drove away the servants who were restraining the man. In this way, the king understood Śrī Sukhānanda's spiritual influence and took shelter of him.

Once, as he was singing in the *gaurī raga*, many deer became attracted and came to him. When the young prince wanted to kill them, Śrī Sukhānanda endeavored to restrain him. The prince ignored his request, placing an arrow upon his bow. Just then, one of the deer took the form of a lion and attacked the prince. Later on, the prince surrendered to Śrī Sukhānanda and begged his pardon. In return, he was blessed with devotion for the Supreme Lord.

Śrī Sukhānanda would wander about here and there with a group of devotees, but he never begged for food from anyone. Once, when there was no arrangement for a meal, he simply ordered his associates to chant the holy names of the Lord. By the power of the holy name, the villagers brought all kinds of food and offered everything to the devotees.

When Śrī Sukhānanda left this world, Śrī Hanumān personally appeared before him. It is said that Śrī Sukhānanda merged in his body.

❀ Text 65 ❀

❀ Śrī Surasurānanda ❀

Śrī Surasurānanda demonstrated the truth of the scriptural statement about the glories of the Supreme Lord's *mahā-prasāda* remnants of food. Once, while he was traveling, Śrī Surasurānanda ate some *pakorās* made from pulses. Following in his footsteps, his disciples also ate *pakorās* to their full satisfaction. Because of this behavior of his disciples, Śrī Surasurānanda became upset with them. He said, "Because you have eaten *prasāda* because of the nice taste and not because of love and devotion, you should vomit it."

Thus the disciples vomited whatever they had eaten. After this, Śrī Surasurānanda, the husband of Surasurī, also vomited, and from his stomach came a green *tulasī* leaf and flowers. Because he had honored the Lord's *prasāda* with faith, considering it to be the Lord's mercy, the *pakora* became green like a *tulasī* leaf.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Surasurānanda was an incarnation of Nārada. He was born in a village called Parakhama, near Lucknow. His father was Śrī Sureśvara Sharma and mother was Śrīmatī-devī. He was born on a Thursday, the ninth of the waning moon in the month of Vaiśākha. His previous name was Bhāyaṇa

Kumāra. Immediately after his sacred thread ceremony, he went to Kāśī. There, a stranger *brāhmaṇa* named Nārāyaṇa addressed him as Nārada and whispered in his ears that he should take shelter of Śrī Rāmānandācārya. Saying this, the *brāhmaṇa* disappeared.

Having received this divine order, Śrī Surasurānanda approached Śrī Rāmānandācārya. When he heard the sound of a conchshell, he fell down unconscious. While he was unconscious, he heard a celestial voice saying, "You are an incarnation of Nārada. Because you had a desire to get married, you have come in this form in order to fulfill that desire."

When Śrī Surasurānanda regained consciousness, a *brāhmaṇa* girl who had no father or mother arrived at Śrī Rāmānandācārya's āśrama. The ācārya blessed her to become fortunate. Śrī Svāmī awarded spiritual initiation to both of them and Bhāyaṇa Kumāra became Śrī Surasurānanda, and the girl was named Surasurī. After imparting spiritual knowledge unto both of them, Śrī Svāmījī arranged for their marriage by having them offer the *prasāda* garland of the Supreme Lord to each other. The couple then received the blessings of Śrī Svāmījī, and taking his permission, they returned home.

Once, Kāmadeva had been defeated by Nārada and so in order to take revenge he again tried to display his influence, but in the presence of devotional service, he was again embarrassed. Soon after his marriage, Śrī Surasurānanda left for the spiritual world.

Śrī Surasurānanda then returned so that he could engage in the service of his spiritual master. He inquired from his spiritual master about the welfare of all living entities, and about the ultimate goal of life and how to attain it. These instructions are found in a book by Śrī Svāmījī entitled *Vaiṣṇava Matābja Bhāskara*. He studied all the commentaries of the ācāryas from Śrī Anantānanda.

By the order of Śrī Svāmījī, he traveled to South India and saved the holy places there from the clutches of the Yavanas. He instructed them that both Hindus and Muslims are children of the same God, and that any Muslim who causes suffering to the heart of a Hindu would never excused by God. Many people surrendered to him and begged for his forgiveness.

While traveling, Śrī Surasurānanda saw at some place that a groom had been killed and all his family members were crying around him. Seeing their sadness, Śrī Surasurānanda brought the dead groom back to life by giving him the Supreme Lord's *caraṇāmṛta*. At the end of his life, he resided at Ayodhyā, and while perceiving his worshipable Lord on the shore of the River Sarayū, he left this world and went to Vaikuṇṭha.

❀ **Text 66** ❀❀ **Śrīmatī Surasurī** ❀

As exalted, chaste women in the past wonderfully demonstrated their chastity, Śrīmatī Surasurī's showed the perfect example of chastity by the mercy of the Lord. The extremely magnanimous couple, Śrī Surasurānanda and Śrīmatī Surasurī left home and went to the forest to perform their *bhajana*. While residing in the forest, something wonderful happened. Śrī Nābhā warns that the devotees should not become disheartened by hearing about this incident.

One day, as both of them were sitting in a solitary place and chanting the holy names of the Lord, some wicked *mlecchas* tried their best to kidnap Śrīmatī Surasurī. At that time, the couple simply remembered Lord Śrī Rāma, who carries a bow called Śārṅga. As soon as His devotees remembered Him, Śrī Rāma appeared in the form of Śrī Nṛsimha and killed the demons, thus preserving the chastity of Śrīmatī Surasurī.

❀ **Text 67** ❀❀ **Śrī Narahariyānanda** ❀

For the sake of Śrī Narahariyānanda, goddess Durgā became a tax payer. The story goes like this. Once, during the rainy season there was a shortage of dry wood for

cooking for the service of the Lord at the house of Śrī Narahariyānanda. Seeing this as an impediment to the service to his Deity and saintly devotees, Śrī Narahariyānanda began tearing down the temple of goddess Durgā so that he could use the wood as fuel for cooking for the Lord.

At this, goddess Durgā manifested before Śrī Narahariyānanda and said, “Do not tear down my temple like this. Every day, I will personally bring a bundle of dry wood to your house.”

From that day onwards, goddess Durgā brought dry wood to Śrī Narahariyānanda’s house. Seeing this, a neighbor thought, “I should also get dry wood from goddess Durgā in the same manner.” And so like Śrī Narahariyānanda, he began tearing down goddess Durgā’s temple. However, in response, goddess Durgā beat him severely and threw him onto the ground. Then she forced him to carry the bundle of dry wood to Śrī Narahariyānanda’s āśrama.

In other incidents, goddess Kālī became furious at her so-called worshipers when they tried to kill the Supreme Lord’s devotees, Jaḍa Bharata and Laddu Bhakta.

❀ Additional comment ❀

Śrī Narahariyānanda was an incarnation of Śrī Sanat-kumāra. He was born on Friday, the third day of the waxing moon in the month of Vaiśākha. His father’s name was Maheśvara Miśra and his mother’s name was Ambikā-devī. His childhood name was

Narahari.

After his sacred thread ceremony, Narahari went to Śrī Rāmānandācārya Svāmī at Kāśī and requested him to give him initiation. On the order of Śrī Svāmījī, Śrī Anantānanda gave him initiation and awarded him the name Śrī Narahariyānanda. He was then taught the Ānandabhāṣya commentary written by Śrī Rāmānandācārya. He resided in the cottage at the Pañcagaṅgā-ghāṭa and began worshiping Lord Vijaya Rāghava (Śālagrāma) with the chanting of a Śrī Rāma *mantra*.

Once, Śrī Narahariyānanda saved the daughter of rich man from drowning in the Gaṅgā, and the young girl made a vow that whoever had saved her by holding her hand would become her husband. When Śrī Rāmānandācārya came to know of this, he said that the young girl will only live for four more years. Therefore he sent Śrī Narahariyānanda on a journey to visit the holy places of pilgrimage throughout the country.

Once, Śrī Narahariyānanda came to Nilācala and observed to vow of *cāturmāśya*. There, he met a Rājapūta Ṭhākura by the name of Vijaya Bahādur Singh of Gadhakhala, Rajasthan. This person was very impressed by Śrī Narahariyānanda’s instructions and so, after the completion of *cāturmāśya*, he brought him to his place. Thereafter Śrī Narahariyānanda stayed in that area for thirty-five years, propagating the cult of pure devotional service. There is a seat dedicated to Śrī Narahariyānanda at

this place.

Later on, Śrī Narahariyānanda moved to Citrakūṭa and spent the rest of his life there. He wrote two famous books named Śrī Anantatattvāmṛta and Śrī Nāmaprathāpa. Śrī Śivajī gave him his *darśana* and explained to him the purport of Śrī Rāmacarita Mānasa. His instructions are very moving and full of meaning.

❀ Text 68 ❀

❀ Śrī Padmanābha ❀

By the mercy of Śrī Kabīra dāsa, Śrī Padmanābha understood the glories of the holy name so that his only treasury in life was the holy name of the Lord. Indeed, he accepted the Lord's holy name as his *mahā-mantra*. He would adore and serve the holy name of the Lord and treat the chanting of the holy name as equal to direct service to the Supreme Lord. He accepted the chanting of the holy name as being more important than the chanting of Vedic *mantras*, performance of penance, visiting holy places, and all other pious acts. He did not know any other activity than chanting the holy name of the Lord. His friendship and enmity towards others was simply based on the holy name. In other words, he was friendly to those who were attached to the holy name and hostile towards those who were averse to the holy name. In every condition of life, he would take shelter and remember the holy names of the Supreme Lord. He had firm faith that

whether one chanted the holy name with love and devotion, or whether one chanted out of envy, the holy name would benefit the chanter. He realized the holy name of the Lord to be non-different from the Supreme Lord Himself. He had firm faith that the holy name of the Lord alone could free the conditioned souls from the bondage of material existence.

The prime example of this fact is Śrī Ajāmila. The holy name of Śrī Rāma is superior to Śrī Rāma. This was revealed by Hanumān in the presence of Śrī Rāma.

❀ Commentary ❀

There lived a rich man in Kāśī who contracted leprosy. The disease became so serious that worms attached themselves to the sores. In such a condition, his relatives, as well as the neighbors, began threatening him. Being unable to find a cure for his disease, the man decided to end his life by drowning in the Gaṅgā. As he was about to jump into the water, many people gathered around to watch the spectacle. Just then, by the arrangement of Providence, Śrī Padmanābha passed by on the road.

Seeing the crowd, Śrī Padmanābha went near them and made inquiries. When the people told him everything, Śrī Padmanābhajī told them to stop the man from committing suicide, telling them to untie the ropes he had used to bind a heavy stone to his body. When the people didn't respond, Śrī Padmanābha told the diseased

man, "Simply enter the water and nicely bathe, and while bathing, chant the holy name of Śrī Rāma three times."

The diseased man did as he was told, and to everyone's astonishment, his body was cured of the disease so that he appeared completely healthy. From that time onwards, that man dedicated his life to rendering devotional service to the Lord until his last breath.

When Śrī Padmanābha went and narrated this incident to his spiritual master, Śrī Kabīr dāsa, he said, "Alas! You have not understood the true glories of the Lord's holy name. That is why you instructed the leper to chant the His holy name three times for curing an insignificant disease. This can be accomplished simply by *nāmābhāsa*, or a reflection of the holy name.

❁ Text 69 ❁

❁ Śrī Tattvā, Śrī Jīvā ❁

The great devotees, Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā, were residents of South India. They delivered the members of their dynasty and became famous devotees of the Supreme Lord. Their fame is still celebrated in the society of saintly persons. They were like the two shores of the nectarean ocean of devotional service. Like the previous ācāryas, their love and devotion for the Lord and His devotees increased day by day, just as the shadow of an

object becomes longer and longer as the sun sets in the west. Their influence was similar to that of the members of the Raghu dynasty. They were endowed with saintly qualities and always engaged in righteous activities. They were heroic, sober, liberal, merciful, experienced, and always fixed in devotion to the Supreme Lord. They appeared just like the sun, shining upon the world of Vaiṣṇavas in order to enable lotuses in the form of the devotees of the Śrī-sampradāya blossom.

❁ Commentary ❁

Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā were brothers belonging to the *brāhmaṇa* community. They both took a vow to serve saintly persons, but they had maintained an idea that prevented them from taking initiation. Their idea was that they would accept spiritual initiation only from a person whose *caraṇāmṛta* (water that had washed his feet) would nourish a dried up tree.

Keeping this in mind, Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā planted the dried up stump of a tree near their doorstep. When a devotee would visit their house, Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā would serve him and then take his *caraṇāmṛta* and place it on the stump to see whether it would grow or not. In this way, they waited for a long time in search of a spiritual master. Then, by the arrangement of Providence, Śrī Kabīra dāsa visited their house and their desire was fulfilled. Both of them fell at Śrī Kabīra dāsa's feet and requested him to give them initiation.

Śrī Kabīradāsa instructed Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā about the holy name of the Lord and also gave them the address of his residence at Kāśī. Saying this, he departed.

Because Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā took initiation from Śrī Kabīradāsa, the *brāhmaṇas* of the village began to criticize them saying that they had become degraded and thus had lost their brāhminical qualifications. All of the *brāhmaṇas* assembled and decided to ostracize Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā from their society, thus prohibiting them to sit with them for having their meal. They also decreed that their sons could no longer get married to Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā's daughters.

The brothers went to Kāśī, where Śrī Kabīra dāsa resided. When asked about their welfare, Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā described Śrī Kabīra dāsa everything that was going on in their village. After some consideration, Śrī Kabīradāsa advised them, saying, "Each of you brothers has one daughter and one son of marriageable age, and so you arrange for their marriages to those who are suitable irrespective of caste. This will not weaken your position in society, but will rather help to increase your devotional service."

Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā returned home and made known their plans. All the caste *brāhmaṇas* and others became very disturbed and angry with them, thinking that they had become mad and bereft of all good intelligence.

Still, Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā remained firm in their convictions, thinking, "We will do what we have decided; never mind

anyone's protest."

Many people from the village went to Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā and tried to convince them to give up their stubbornness. The *brāhmaṇas* even went so far as to assure them that they would reinstate them in society and arrange proper marriages for their sons and daughters.

After hearing this, one of the brothers returned to Kāśī to get Śrī Kabīra dāsa's opinion. Śrī Kabīra dāsa said, "If those people are ready to compromise then they should be punished for their previous display of envy. And the punishment is that they should sign an agreement that they will adopt the path of devotional service to the Lord and, as promised, arrange for the marriage of your daughter."

On the order of their spiritual master, Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā first converted all their future inlaws to devotional service and then gave their daughters in marriage and accepted the *brāhmaṇas*' daughters for their sons. In this way they converted many godless people into devotees of the Lord. Seeing their faith in the spiritual master, many godless people began following the path chalked out by them.

❀ Additional comment ❀

Once, there was a saintly person who was observing the vow of silence. At the end of his vow, that person asked Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā to give five thousand rupees for feeding the devotees. Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā

sold their household items and their wives' ornaments, thus collecting four thousand rupees. They then borrowed one thousand rupees and handed over the five thousand rupees to that saintly person.

However, after a few days, it was time for their daughters' marriages and so they needed money. At that time, the Supreme Lord gave them information in a dream about some wealth buried in the ground. In this way, their good names were preserved.

Another time, a king who was a devotee of Lord Śiva performed a great sacrifice to please him and at that time, he gave lakhs of rupees in charity to the *brāhmaṇas*. However, when he wanted to give charity to Śrī Tattvā and Śrī Jīvā, they said, "If you want to give us something then give us Lord Rāma. We do not want anything else. All the things of this world are useless. Only devotion to the Supreme Lord awards a person true benefit.

❀ Text 70 ❀

❀ Śrī Mādhava dāsa ❀

It is understood that Śrī Vedavyāsa appeared as Śrī Mādhava dāsa, the personification of humility, for the welfare of the people of the world. Śrī Vedavyāsa had previously divided the *Vedas* and had compiled the eighteen *Purāṇas*. Then he composed the great epic, *Mahābhārata*. Finally, he took the essence of all the Vedic

literature and compiled Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the ripened fruit from the tree of Vedic knowledge.

Now that same Vedavyāsa appeared as Śrī Mādhava dāsa, who preached the purport of all the scriptures in simple language that was understandable by ordinary people. He sang about the pastimes of the Supreme Lord throughout the entire country and delivered countless people from the ocean of material existence. His trademark greeting was "Jai Jai Jagannātha!" His worshipable Lord was Śrī Jagannāthadeva. He exhibited the limit of renunciation. His heart was always filled with feelings of compassion for all living entities.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Mādhava dāsa was born in a *brāhmaṇa* family at Kānyakubja. When his dear wife left this world, he became detached from family life, understanding the temporary nature of the material world. When his son grew up, he gave him the responsibility of maintaining the family and left home. Actually, he left the responsibility of maintaining his family members in the hands of the Lord because it is He who is the sole maintainer and protector of everyone. One who thinks himself to be the maintainer of his family is a fool.

After leaving home, Śrī Mādhava dāsa went to Śrī Jagannātha Purī. He resided in a valley at Nilācala Mountain, near the seashore. Śrī Mādhava dāsa was a very sober

and humble person. He was so completely absorbed in love of Godhead that he forgot about eating and drinking.

Sometimes Śrī Mādhava dāsa would fast for three days and still not feel any pangs of hunger and thirst because his mind remained merged in meditation on the Lord. Still, the Lord is always anxious about the welfare of His devotees. Thus the Lord kept aside some food which was offered to Him during the śayana bhoga and had Śrī Lakṣmī personally take the *prasāda* on a golden plate to the cottage of Śrī Mādhava dāsa.

Śrī Mādhava dāsa was sitting in his cottage with his back facing the door, and so when Śrī Lakṣmī arrived, he could only hear the sound of her ankle bells. At that time, he was meditating on the divine couple within his heart, and upon Śrī Lakṣmī's arrival, a flash of lightning manifested in the cottage. It is for this reason that when Śrī Mādhava dāsa looked around, but could not have the *darśana* of Lakṣmī. Then, when he saw the plate full of *prasāda* on the floor, he became highly pleased. Realizing that this was the Lord's mercy and his great good fortune, he honored the *prasāda* and then kept the plate on the floor.

The next morning, when the *pāṇḍās* and *pūjārīs* opened the temple door of Lord Jagannātha for performing worship, they could not find the plate of śayana bhoga. As a result, they became despondent and fearful as they searched for the plate here and there. Finally, they found the plate in the cottage of Śrī Mādhava dāsa. The *pāṇḍās*

arrested him and beat him up with a stick.

Actually Lord Jagannātha personally accepted the bruises from the body of Śrī Mādhava dāsa just to display His affection for His devotee. This mystery was revealed when the *pūjārīs* applied sandalwood paste to the Lord's body. They were astonished to see bruises on the back of Lord Jagannātha. The Lord told them, "It was I who sent the plate of *prasāda* and only for that reason did Śrī Mādhava dāsa accept it."

The *pāṇḍās* and *pūjārīs* realized their mistake and so they earnestly begged forgiveness for their offense from Lord Jagannātha and Śrī Mādhava dāsa. Very soon, news of this incident spread all over Purī so that Śrī Mādhava dāsa's glories spread all over the four directions. Indeed, he became a celebrity even outside Purī. Still, he would feel embarrassed while hearing about his fame from others. That is the proper etiquette as described in the scriptures.

Whenever Śrī Mādhava dāsa went to have the *darśana* of Lord Jagannātha in the temple, he would completely forget himself. Sometimes he would stay at the temple during the night, but no one knew of this.

Once, in the winter, Śrī Mādhava dāsa felt terribly cold at night. Then something wonderful happened. As Śrī Mādhava dāsa felt his body tormented by cold, the Deities in the temple began to shiver. Lord Jagannātha then covered Śrī Mādhava dāsa's body with His blanket. When Śrī Mādhava dāsa realized this causeless mercy

of the Lord, his heart melted with love and devotion.

Once, when Śrī Mādhava dāsa was suffering from dairreah, he hurried to the seashore and remained there. When his body became thin and weak so that he was unable to fetch water, the Lord personally gave him water. When he returned to external consciousness, Śrī Mādhava dāsa recognized the Lord and spoke with great unhappiness: “O Lord, I recognize You! How unfortunate I am that You have performed this menial service for someone so fallen and wretched as I. Alas! By doing this, You have lost your position as God.”

Lord Jagannātha said, “What could I do? Alas! I cannot tolerate for even a moment the sufferings of My devotee. “

To this, Śrī Mādhava dāsa said, “If this be the case then kindly remove my pangs forever, because I feel more distress by seeing You offering me service than the physical distress I was experiencing due to cold.

The Lord then said, “In this regard, I face a dilemma. If I forever relieve you of all pain and if you still have some remaining karma to suffer or enjoy, I would be violating the subtle laws of nature laid down by Me. One is bound to enjoy or suffer the fruits of his actions. Therefore, instead of violating this law, I have set aside My position as God to engage in your service. This is one reason why I will not remove your pain eternally. Now listen to another reason why I engaged in your service. I thought that no one should

ridicule My devotee, saying that there is no one to help him in a distressed condition.”

In this way, Śrī Mādhava dāsa and Lord Jagannātha conversed, and in no time all his sufferings vanquished. Śrī Mādhava dāsa spread the cult of devotional service throughout the world by preaching the glories of the Supreme Lord.

Seeing his fame increasing day by day, Śrī Mādhava dāsa began begging alms door to door, thinking that this would minimize his position in the eyes of the common people. One day, an elderly lady threw in his face a cloth used for cleaning the kitchen. Still, Śrī Mādhava dāsa did not become angry, but rather found some good quality in the lady, thinking that at least she had gave him something.

Śrī Mādhava dāsa picked up the dirty cloth, washed it very nicely, and then prepared ghee wicks from it. He actually used those wicks in a temple ghee lamp. When those ghee wicks were lit in the temple, the darkness in that lady's heart immediately vanished. The next day, Śrī Mādhava dāsa again went to the house of that old lady to see whether there was any change in her nature or not. As soon as the old lady saw him, she fell down at his feet.

Śrī Mādhava dāsa instructed the lady about devotional service. He was so merciful that even though she had beaten him with a cloth, he did not retaliate, but instead made her life glorious by giving her spiritual instructions. What then can be said about the benefit received by a person who serves

Śrī Mādhava dāsa?

Once, a great scholar came to Śrī Jagannātha Purī on a tour to conquer all the scholars of the world. He challenged Śrī Mādhava dāsa to debate with him on scriptural subjects. Śrī Mādhava dāsa signed and sealed a paper, admitting his defeat, and gave it to the world-conquering scholar.

When the scholar came to Kāśī and opened the victory certificate, he saw this was written: “Śrī Mādhava dāsa is victorious.” Seeing this, the scholar was ashamed and then felt harsh anger at Śrī Mādhava dāsa. The scholar again went to Jagannātha Purī and defeated Śrī Mādhavadāsajī without any debate, just as he did before. This time, to teach Śrī Mādhava dāsa a lesson for the humiliating miracle he had performed, the scholar hired an ass and said to him, “Ride on the back of this ass with a garland of shoes around your neck. Only then will I be happy.”

Śrī Mādhavadāsajī replied, “First let me take a bath and then I will do whatever you say.”

In the meantime, Lord Jagannātha disguised Himself as a student and defeated the learned scholar in a scriptural debate. He then forced the scholar to ride on the back of the ass around the city. Seeing this, all the devotees became very happy.

Śrī Priyādāsa says that by seeing Lord Jagannātha’s affection for His devotees, he feels very joyful.

As Śrī Mādhava dāsa continued to reside at Śrī Nīlācala, he constantly sang about

Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in Vraja Dhāma. One day, he had a strong desire to visit Śrī Vraja Vṛndāvana. Thus he started for Vṛndāvana, and the Lord followed him without Śrī Mādhava dāsa noticing.

In a village on the way there lived a Vaiṣṇavī who invited Śrī Mādhava dāsa to accept *prasāda* at her house. Śrī Mādhava dāsa went to her house and sat down to take *prasāda*. Suddenly, the eyes of the lady devotee became filled with tears. Seeing this, Śrī Mādhava dāsa asked, “Alas! What has happened? Why are your eyes filled with tears? You can disclose your distress to me without hesitation.”

The lady devotee said, “O Bābājī, why did you bring this bluish-complexioned young boy with you? I wonder how His mother is maintaining her life without Him.”

By hearing this, Śrī Mādhava dāsa lost all composure. He got up and left that place and walked to another village where a *vaiśya* devotee lived. This devotee had previously visited Śrī Jagannātha Purī and had requested Śrī Mādhava dāsa to visit his house some day. Thus Śrī Mādhava dāsa thought, “If I ever go to Vṛndāvana, I will go to his house on the way.” Therefore he decided to visit that devotee’s house.

However, by the will of the Lord, the devotee was not at home and Śrī Mādhava dāsa went to another devotee’s house. His wife, a great devotee of the Lord, was at home, and when Śrī Mādhava dāsa arrived, she offered him her obeisances and requested him to take *prasāda*.

Earlier that day, another devotee had come and he was staying in the upper floor of that house. The lady devotee went upstairs and informed the guest devotee that another devotee had just now come. However, the guest devotee said, “There is no room here for anyone else.”

The lady became anxious as she came downstairs. She then said to Śrī Mādhava dāsa, “I will give you some uncooked food grains. Kindly cook and then have your meal.”

Śrī Mādhava dāsa said “Because you had a desire to feed me, just give me whatever you have already cooked.”

The lady devotee then offered Śrī Mādhava dāsa some milk which had been boiling for quite some time. In this way her desire was fulfilled. When Śrī Mādhava dāsa left her house, he said “When your husband returns, tell him that Jagannāthi Śrī Mādhava dāsa had come.”

After thus revealing his identity to the lady devotee, Śrī Mādhava dāsa departed. After a short time, the lady’s husband returned home and heard from his wife that Śrī Mādhava dāsa had come to their house. As soon as he heard this auspicious news, he ran after Śrī Mādhava dāsa with the guest devotee running behind him. They came upon Śrī Mādhava dāsa and fell down at his feet. Śrī Mādhava dāsa happily reciprocated with them, as all three were happy with their meeting.

Śrī Mādhava dāsa praised the householder devotee, saying, “Your wife is glorious

became she has great faith in service to the devotees. She is also fortunate because she has a devotee husband like you. You are also fortunate to have such a devoted wife.”

The guest devotee then humbly said, “I have committed a grave offense. How can I atone for that fault?”

Śrī Mādhava dāsa said, “As long as you remain alive, accept the remnants of the devotees’ *prasāda*. This is the infallible way to become free from all offenses.”

When requested to come to his house, Śrī Mādhava dāsa told the householder devotee, “I will see you when I return.” From there, Śrī Mādhava dāsa proceeded toward Vṛndāvana, where the spring season prevails all throughout the year. Śrī Mādhava dāsa arrived at Śrī Vṛndāvana, and the more he saw the beauty of the place, the more he became merged into an ocean of transcendental bliss.

He went to the temple of Śrī Bānke Bihārī to have the Lord’s *darśana*. There he received some *prasāda* in the form of roasted chickpeas. Although the guard said, “If you wait a little, you can have Śrī Bānke Bihārīlāl’s *mahā-prasāda*,” he simply took the chickpea *prasāda* and went to the shore of the Yamunā. There, on the sanctified bank of the river, he offered the chickpeas to his Deity and took the remnants.

Meanwhile, Swāmī Śrī Haridāsa took a plate of various foodstuffs and offered it to Śrī Bānke Bihārī. As he placed the offering plate in front of the Lord and began to meditate, he saw in that the Deity, Śrī Bānke

Bihārī, was not willing to accept the food.

Śrī Svāmījī asked, My dear Lord, why are you not accepting the *bhoga* today?

Śrī Bihārī replied, "Today I am not in the mood to eat."

Śrī Svāmījī asked, "Why is that so?"

Śrī Bihārī replied, "My stomach is full, Śrī Mādhava dāsa has fed Me chickpeas.

Śrī Svāmījī asked, "Where is he?"

Śrī Bihārī said, "He is now sitting on the shore of the Yamunā."

Thereafter, on the order of Śrī Svāmījī, his disciples and servants went and found Śrī Mādhava dāsa and then brought him to the temple. When questioned, Śrī Mādhava dāsa described how he had offered chickpeas to the Lord. At that time, he remarked, "If your Lord is a cowherd boy then He will easily digest my chickpeas, and if He is one who lives in an opulent palace then He will not be able to digest them. I have understood that your Lord is Śrī Nikuñjabihārī, (He who enjoys pastimes in the groves)."

Śrī Svāmījī then smilingly said to Śrī Mādhava dāsa, "You are detached from worldly life, and that is alright, but it is not good to be detached from the Lord's Deity form and His *prasāda*."

Śrī Svāmījī also explained to Śrī Mādhava dāsa the spontaneous worship of the Lord in the mood of the residents of Vṛndāvana.

Śrī Mādhava dāsa travelled to the different holy places in Vraja-maṇḍala. When he went to Bhāṇḍīravāṭa, he met a renounced devotee named Khema dāsa. That night,

Khema dāsa secretly at some sweet rice and so to teach him a lesson, Śrī Mādhava dāsa miraculously displayed worms in the sweet rice. After this, he imparted many instructions for Khema's benefit.

To hear narrations of the Lord's pastimes, Śrī Mādhava dāsa went to a village in Haryana and resided there for some time. At that place he served in the āśrama of a saintly devotee, His service was to collect cow dung and clean with it. When he was recognized, Śrī Mādhava dāsa left that place and set out on the long journey to return to Śrī Jagannātha Purī. On the way he passed through his native village, and to ascertain the welfare of his mother and son, he visited his former house.

Also the way, by the inspiration of the Lord, the previously-mentioned *vaiśya* devotee offered him *prasāda*. There are many other stories about Śrī Mādhava dāsa's pastimes and characteristics. Indeed, his goodness of character is unlimited. Śrī Priyādāsa says that whatever he had heard about the characteristics of Śrī Mādhava dāsa, he has described in detail.

❀ Additinoal Commentary ❀

Once, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma took Śrī Mādhava dāsa and went to the king's orchard to eat ripe jackfruit. They had Śrī Mādhava dāsa climb one of the trees. When the gardeners came there, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma ran away but they caught Śrī Mādhava dāsa, beat him, and took him to

the king. The king immediately recognized Śrī Mādhava dāsa and offered his obeisances at his feet. The king wanted to punish the gardeners but Śrī Mādhava dāsa restrained him, saying that they were simply carrying out their duty. Thereafter, the king offered the entire orchard in the name of the Lord for His service and also gave twelve *bighas* of land to the gardeners.

❖ **Text 71** ❖❖ **Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī** ❖

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī would stand in front of the Lion Gate of Śrī Jagannātha Temple just as Śrī Garuḍa stands in front of the Lord. It is well known that when Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī felt cold, Lord Jagannātha would cover him with His blanket. Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī had intense love and attachment for the lotus feet of Lord Jagannātha. He was constantly engaged in the service of the Lord without break or deviation. He accepted Vaiṣṇavism as the topmost religion and passed his time joyfully at Nīlācala-dhāma. The people of Orissa used to address him as Śrī Garuḍājī.

❖ **Commentary** ❖

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī belonged to an aristocratic family so that there was no lack of wealth or property at his house. But because he had intense attachment for the

lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he left his opulent house and went to reside at Jagannātha Purī. His father would send him a huge amount of wealth, but he would not accept any of it. His only happiness was the *darśana* of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and a residence close to Him.

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī would stand by the main entrance of the Jagannātha Temple and have the *darśana* of the Lord's enchanting form. Once, during winter, he felt cold at night and so Lord Jagannātha gave him His blanket.

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's father, Śrī Govardhana dāsa Majumdar, was a landlord in the village of Saptagrāma in West Bengal. His uncle, Śrī Hiraṇya dāsa, had no children. They would collect taxes for the King of Bengal, and the annual collection was of Rs. 20 lakhs. Out of this, they were supposed to deposit Rs. 12 lakhs as revenue to the king, and the balance eight lakhs would be their profit. Rs. 8 lakhs in those days would amount to Rs. 8 crores at present. Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was the only child due to inherit this huge wealth and extensive property. One can just imagine how dear he was to his parents.

However, from his childhood, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was detached from material happiness. In his youth, he had the good fortune to meet Śrī Haridāsa Ṭhākura, a most dear associate of Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu, at the school of his teacher, Śrī Balarāmācārya.

When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu went to

Śrī Advaitācārya's house after accepting sannyāsa, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī also went there and had His association for seven days. He was fortunate to associate with, hear from, and honor the remnants of food relished by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Although Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī returned home on the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, his heart remained absorbed in thoughts of the Lord. Seeing his detachment from the worldly life, his parents quickly arranged for his marriage with a most beautiful and aristocratic girl, but there was no change in Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's mind.

Later on, when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu again arrived at Śāntipura, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī went to see Him. This time, the Lord explained to him the real meaning of renunciation and then sent him home.

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī accepted Śrī Kṛṣṇa *mantra* initiation from Śrī Yadunandanācārya. About two years later, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu came to Pānihati at the house of Śrī Rāghava Paṇḍita. When Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī went there to have His *darśana*, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu called him a thief because he was trying to steal His property (Gauracandra) without His permission. As a result, the Lord had Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī feed all the devotees yogurt and flat rice as punishment. Immediately a huge festival was arranged, and at that time, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī received the remnants of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu so that his bondage to

worldly life was broken asunder.

Thereafter, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī went home but began residing in the Durga maṇḍapa. Seeing this, his parents kept many guards around him so that he could not run away from home. One day, his spiritual master, Śrī Yadunandanācārya, called him to his house because he needed a *pujārī*. However, instead of going to the *pujārī*'s house, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī proceeded towards Nilācala. It took him twelve days to reach Śrī Jagannātha Purī, and when he saw Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu, he surrendered his body, mind, speech and, everything unto His lotus feet. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu handed him over to Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara, and from that day onwards he became known as Svarūpa's Raghu.

The Lord ordered His servant, Govinda, to make special arrangements for Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's *prasāda*. For five days Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī accepted *prasāda* from the hands of Govinda, but beginning from the sixth day, he stood in front of the Lion Gate at the Jagannātha temple and begged alms. Hearing of this, Mahāprabhu became very pleased.

Another day, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī inquired from Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara about his duties and in turn, Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara asked Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to explain the essence of all instructions to Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.

The Lord said, "You should not hear worldly talks, you should not eat very palatable foodstuffs, you should not wear

opulent clothing, you should not expect any respect from others, you should always be ready to offer respect to everyone, you should always chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, and you should always serve Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in your mind.”

Having received Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s instructions, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī stopped begging for alms at the Lion Gate, considering this to be the profession of a prostitute. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu became exceedingly pleased by this and gave him a *govardhana-śīlā* and *guñjā-mālā* and ordered him to worship them with love and devotion. Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara gave him a wooden āsana, two pieces of cloth measuring half a cubit each, and a long-necked water pot for his service.

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī would spend twenty-two and half hour out of twenty-four hours in the service of the Supreme Lord, and with only one and a half hours he would eat and sleep. Later on, he began collecting the old and rotten *prasāda* which the shopkeepers threw away at night and after washing it, he would honor it with a pinch of salt.

One day, after hearing about Śrī Raghunātha dāsa’s renunciation, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu went to him and said, “O Raghu, you eat such delicious food in a secluded place without inviting Me.”

Saying this, the Lord took a handful of rice and put it into His mouth. Śrī Raghunātha dāsa cried out, “O Lord, please do not do this.” Mahāprabhu then said to Śrī Svarūpa

Dāmodara, “I have never relished such a wonderful taste like this before.”

While exhibiting the limit of renunciation, as well as love and devotion for the Lord, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa resided at Śrī Jagannātha Purī. Finally, by the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī left Purī and went to Vṛndāvana, where he resided at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. It is not possible to describe how he lived, how he chanted the holy names of the Lord, how he instructed others, and his intense eagerness to see the beauty of the Supreme Lord. Anyone who hears about his character becomes struck with wonder. He always remained in a state of spiritual ecstasy by constantly thinking of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

One day, while Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was worshiping the Lord within his mind, he offered sweetrice and then, at the request of the Lord, accepted the remnants with a devotion-filled heart. He was in ecstasy, but somehow or other, after partaking of it, he came down with a fever. A physician was summoned, and after checking Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī’s pulse, he concluded that the patient must have eaten sweetrice.

Śrī Priyādāsa says, “To what extent can I describe the glories of Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī? From whatever I have narrated, you can simply imagine how great a devotee he was. I simply pray to Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī that he may be pleased with me and award me his devotional mood so that my life will become successful.

❀ **Text 72** ❀❀ **Śrī Nityānanda and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya** ❀

Because of the potency of Śrī Nityānanda's and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu's devotional influence, the chanting of the holy names of the Lord spread throughout the ten directions. These two supreme personalities vanquished the widespread atheism that had overcome Gauḍa-deśa and inspired everyone to engage in worshiping the Supreme Lord. Both were an ocean of mercy, supremely magnanimous, and the bestowers of the highest welfare to the conditioned souls. Both were constantly absorbed in the ecstasy of love of God. Many great personalities took shelter of Them and worshiped Their lotus feet. Simply by chanting Their names, the conditioned souls become free from all sinful reactions. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma appeared as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and Śrī Nityānanda in the eastern part of the country.

❀ **Commentary** ❀❀ **Śrī Nityānanda** ❀

Śrī Nityānanda is the incarnation of Śrī Balarāma. Śrī Balarāma is constantly intoxicated because of drinking the beverage Vāruṇī. Thinking that He should relish the mellows of love of Godhead, Śrī Balarāma appeared in the form of a devotee as Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu. Śrī Balarāma's unfathomable heart is always filled with ecstatic love of Godhead, but still He wanted to experience that love with great intensity. In the form of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, He became so greatly absorbed in the mellows of love of Godhead that He could no longer control Himself. In this incarnation, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu distributed that love of Godhead among His associates, followers, and devotees in general. Simply by hearing about and discussing His transcendental qualities and pastimes of relishing and distributing love of Godhead, countless devotees became intoxicated with that love. There are many literatures which testify to this fact.

❀ **Additional Commentary** ❀

Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu appeared in the village of Ekacakra in the district of Bīrbhum in West Bengal on the 13th day of the waxing moon in the month of Māgha. His father was Hāḍāi Ojhā, and his mother was Padmāvatī-devī. His complexion was golden. Being supremely intelligent, He mastered Sanskrit grammar and various literatures within a

very short time.

In His childhood, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu would enact the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in Vraja as His play. During such play, He would adopt the mood of the character He was playing so perfectly that it became a reality.

Once, as Śrī Nityānanda was playing the role of Lakṣmaṇa, when Meghanāda attacked Him with his śakti weapon, He fell to the ground unconscious and remained like that until another boy who was playing the role of Hanumān brought the *mṛta-saṅjivani* herb.

Once, Śrī Śaṅkarāraṇya (this was the *sannyāsa* name of Śrīla Viśvarūpa, who was the elder brother of Viśvambhara (the original name of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu) came to the house of Hāḍai Ojhā and took Śrī Nityānanda from him on the pretext of needing him as an assistant while traveling to the holy places of pilgrimage. During this journey, Śrī Nityānanda accepted initiation and instructions from Śrīman Mādhavendra Purī.

One day, on the pretext of embracing Him, Śrī Śaṅkarāraṇya merged himself into the form of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu. Both Śrī Viśvarūpa and Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu were incarnations of Śrī Balarāma. Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu came to search for His brother, Kṛṣṇa, in Vṛṇḍāvana, while remaining absorbed in a trance of ecstatic love.

By the arrangement of Providence, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu met Śrī Īśvara Purī, who informed Him that “Your Śrī Kṛṣṇa has now

appeared at Śrī Navadvīpa and is enacting His blissful pastimes there.”

Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu went to Navadvīpa and stayed at the house of Śrī Nandanācārya. In the meantime, realizing that Śrī Nityānanda has arrived at Navadvīpa, Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu, along with Śrīvāsa and Śrī Haridāsa Ṭhākura, went to meet Him. When they arrived, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu was deep in meditation. The verse which begins with *varhāpīḍa naṭavara vapuḥ* from the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was recited and Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu came back to external consciousness. There was a wonderful meeting and later on, a huge congregational chanting of the Lord’s holy names accompanied by uninhibited dancing took place at the house of Śrīvāsa.

Thereafter, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu brought Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu to His mother, Śacīmātā, and said, “My dear mother, look! Your Viśvarūpa has come back.”

Śrī Śacīmātā could see and feel Viśvarūpa in Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and so continued to show love and affection to Him in that way. On the day of Guru Pūrṇimā, or Vyāsa Pūrṇimā, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu worshiped Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu, who then exhibited to Him His six-armed form, holding a conchshell, *cakra*, club, lotus, plough, and mace.

Śrīvāsa and his wife, Mālinī-devī, treated Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu as their loving child, having faith in him in that way. One day, as Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu was having

His meal at the house of Śrī Śacīmātā, out of restlessness He ate from the plate of Mahāprabhu. Śacīmātā became very happy by seeing this.

Once, in His unique ecstatic mood, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu went to Mahāprabhu's without wearing any cloth and danced wildly. Mahāprabhu, along with all the other devotees, washed His lotus feet and drank the *caranāmṛta*.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu ordered Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Haridāsa to spread the congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Hari throughout Navadvīpa. One day, while they preaching the glories of the holy name, they encountered two cruel and sinful persons named Jagāi (Jagannātha) and Mādhāi (Mādhava).

Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu humbly requested them, "O brothers, please chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, and worship Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is your mother, father, wealth, and very life."

Upon hearing this, Mādhāi picked up a broken clay pitcher and threw it at Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, hitting him in the head so that he began to bleed. When Mādhāi tried to hit Him again, Jagāi restrained him. When Mahāprabhu heard the news, He immediately went there in an angry mood and summoned His Śudarsana *cakra*. But Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu pleaded, "My Lord, You had promised not to kill the sinners, but instead destroy their sinful propensity. You have also vowed to show mercy towards all the fallen, conditioned souls. Besides, Jagāi saved Me."

When Mahāprabhu heard this, He became pacified and went and embraced Jagāi. Simply by the Lord's touch all of his sinful reactions that had accumulated during many, many previous lifetimes were destroyed. He then fell down at the lotus feet of Mahāprabhu and surrendered unto Him.

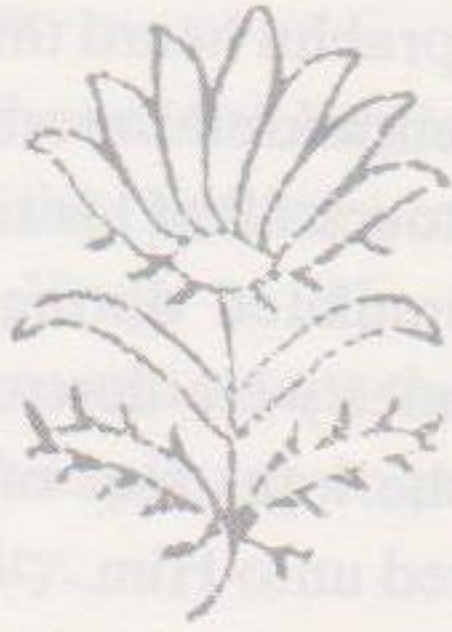
Mādhāi also felt repentent and so he prayed, "O Lord, we have committed so many sins and so kindly deliver us."

Mahāprabhu said, "If you had been offensive to Me, I would have forgiven you, but you have offended Śrī Nityānanda and so I cannot forgive you. Only if the offended person forgives you will you be delivered."

Hearing this, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu said, "O Lord, I will offer the piety I earned during my many, many previous lifetimes in exchange of their deliverance."

Seeing Śrī Nityānanda's compassion, Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu embraced Mādhāi and ordered everyone to chant the holy name of Lord Hari. Śrī Mahāprabhu then took Jagāi and Mādhāi to a bathing *ghāṭa* at the Gangā, where He accepted all of their sinful reactions. Because of this, His golden complexion became slightly blackish for awhile. Even today one can see this *ghāṭa* at the Gangā at Navadvīpa known as Mādhāi-ghāṭa.

Later on, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu married Vasudhā and Jāhnavā. From the womb of Vasudhā appeared a great personality named Śrī Vīracandra Prabhu, who later on became a great Vaiṣṇava ācārya.



❁ Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu ❁

Lord Śyāmasundara admitted defeat after witnessing the incomparable love of the *gopīs* of Vraja. He then considered how He could also relish the unique loving sentiments of the *gopīs*. All the *gopīs* had golden complexions, and they kept themselves nicely dressed and decorated. They were always merged in the ocean of transcendental bliss, for their life and soul was Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The Lord enjoyed pastimes in Vṛndāvana, relishing the loving sentiments of the *gopīs* and reciprocating with them. Śrī Priyādāsa says that Śrī Śyāmasundara thought, “If I assume a form having the complexion and sentiments of the *gopīs* then I can also relish their ecstatic feelings.”

For this purpose, the son of Yaśodā appeared as the son of Śacī and while dancing in the midst of His devotees, He relished love for Kṛṣṇa and displayed unique spiritual sentiments. Whenever Śrī Mahāprabhu would become absorbed in ecstatic love of Godhead, His body would appear to melt and become like a lump of gold. Sometimes His joints would become separated so that

His limbs would appear enlarged. Tears would come from His eyes like water from a syringe. In this way, Śrī Mahāprabhu remained constantly submerged in an ocean of ecstatic love for the divine young couple, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Priyādāsa says, “In my previous verse, I described Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu as directly the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If anyone argues, saying, ‘What is the proof of this,’ then I say that His position as the Supreme Lord was directly exhibited by Him in Jagannātha Purī. He exhibited His four-armed and six-armed forms to His qualified devotees, such as Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭacārya, and He distributed transcendental love of Godhead to everyone without discrimination. This is described in the pages of many scriptures and is also known to everyone.”

In this way, the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, appeared as the all-attractive Śrī Gauracandra in this world. After accepting the *sannyāsa* order of life, He was known as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

Before the appearance of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, the people of Gauḍadeśa did not have a good understanding of devotional service to the Lord. But by chanting the auspicious holy names of Lord Hari, Śrī Mahāprabhu inundated everyone into an ocean of love of Godhead. Each and every one of His associates was a crest jewel of the Vaiṣṇava community, and was capable of delivering all the conditioned souls of the world. Who can describe His transcendental

glories? I am not exaggerating. His glories and my words are confirmed in many, many literatures.

What to speak of others, Śrī Mahāprabhu delivered the most sinful Jagāi and Mādhāi, who were embodiments of millions of Ajāmilas, and drowned them in an ocean of love of Godhead. The entire world became filled with the mood of devotional service preached by Him.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, appeared as the son of Śrī Jagannātha Miśra and Śrīmatī Śacīdevī on the full moon day in the month of Phālguna in 1407 śaka era at Navadvīpa, West Bengal. Śacīmātā's father, Nīlāmbara Cakravartī, named the child Viśvāmbhara. There was a neem tree by the maternity room, and so He was also lovingly addressed as Nimāi. Because His complexion was golden, He was called Gaurāṅga, and because He chanted the holy name of Lord Hari, He was also known as Gaurahari.

Mother Śacī saw the marks of a thunderbolt, *kuśa* grass, etc. in His childhood footprints, and also heard the tinkling of His anklets. When some thieves kidnapped Him with a desire to steal His ornaments, simply by His touch, their hearts became purified so that they gave up their profession of stealing.

Two *brāhmaṇas*, Hiraṇya and Jagadīsa, once offered Him foodstuff, thinking Him to be Gopāla. Another time, when a touring

brāhmaṇa offered Him *bhoga* three times while meditating on Him, He gave him His *darśana* as Gopāla Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Mahāprabhu was very naughty in His childhood, but His elder brother, Viśvarūpa, was very sober. Viśvarūpa went to the school of Śrī Advaitācārya because without knowledge of the scriptures, a *brāhmaṇa* is considered to be blind. Within a short time, He completed His studies.

Śrī Mahāprabhu was the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Himself, appearing in response to the prayers and worship of Śrī Advaitācārya. Being pleased with Him, Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared as Gaurāṅga. After Śrī Mahāprabhu's elder brother took *sannyāsa* and left home, His father left this world. Thereafter, Śrī Mahāprabhu married Śrī Lakṣmīpriyā, the daughter of Vallabhācārya. He then started a Sanskrit school in a Caṇḍi *maṇḍapa* and many students came to study under His guidance. He was always very strict in his religious practices.

Once, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī's disciple, Śrī Īśvara Purī, came to His house, giving Him the opportunity of his association.

Once, Śrī Mahāprabhu visited East Bengal for the purpose of teaching, and at that time He bestowed His mercy upon Śrī Tapan Miśra, instructing him to chant the holy name of Lord Hari. When Śrī Mahāprabhu returned home after an absence of three months, He found that His chaste wife, Śrī Lakṣmīpriyā, had died due to intense separation from Him. Just to please His mother, Śrī Śacīmātā, Śrī Nimāi Paṇḍita

married Śrī Viṣṇupriyā, who was endowed with all good qualities. She was the daughter of a royal priest named Śrī Sanātana Miśra of Navadvīpa.

Śrī Mahāprabhu went to Śrī Gayā-dhāma, and while there, His ecstatic moon began to manifest. At Gayā, He met His spiritual master, Śrī Īśvara Purī, and received initiation and instructions from him. In ecstatic love, the Lord wanted to go to Vṛndāvana but His associates brought Him back to Navadvīpa. He resumed teaching at His school, as advised by His elders, but now He only taught devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu regularly engaged in chanting the holy names of Lord Hari and inspired others to also do so, making His headquarters at the house of Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita. Some envious people complained about Him to the Kāzi, and to King Hussain Shah. The Kāzi, along with some *yavanas*, went to where *saṅkīrtana* was being performed and broke the *mṛdaṅgas*, *karatālas*, and other musical instruments. Hearing of this, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu gathered thousands of devotees the next day and went to the Kāzi's house while chanting the holy names of the Lord.

The Kāzi fearfully hid himself in the interior of his house. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu then summoned him and asked, "Why did you order your men to stop our *kīrtana*?"

The Kāzi replied, "I will never again stop the *kīrtana* because last night in my sleep I saw a ferocious lion. He said, 'If you try

to stop the *kīrtana* then I will tear apart your abdomen just as you have broken the *mṛdaṅgas*.' My Lord, You are directly Lord Nārāyaṇa and so kindly deliver me."

Hearing this, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu lovingly embraced him with love so that the Kāzi began ecstatically chanting the holy name of the Lord. In this way, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu delivered the envious Kāzi.

One evening, when Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita's only son died, he ordered that no one must cry or lament so that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's performance of *saṅkīrtana* would not be disturbed. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to know of this, He summoned the soul of Śrīvāsa's son and had him speak about transcendental knowledge to everyone.

Thus Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu enacted various pastimes at Navadvīpa for twenty-four years, which are known as Ādi-līlā. At the beginning of His Madhya-līlā, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu revealed to His intimate associates His desire to accept the renounced order of life. He solaced His wife and mother, and in the month of Māgha, at midnight, He left home, crossed the Gaṅgā and went to Kātwā, where he accepted *sannyāsa* from Śrī Keśava Bhāratī, according to the prescribed rules and regulations. From that day onwards, He became known as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

Taking permission from his spiritual master, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu started for Vṛndāvana in an ecstatic mood, accompanied by Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu. However, instead of going to Vṛndāvana,

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was led to Śrī Advaitācārya's house at Śāntipura.

All the residents of Navadvīpa rushed to Śāntipura to have the *darśana* of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as a *sannyāsi*. He ate foodstuffs cooked by His mother, and He pacified her in so many ways. From there, He went to Śrī Jagannāth Purī. On the way, Śrī Nityānanda broke His *sannyāsa daṇḍa* and threw it into a river, considering it to be unnecessary.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had the *darśana* of Lord Jagannātha, and He resided at Jagannāth Purī for many years. He also traveled to the holy places in South India and displayed the prowess of pure devotional service. Thereafter, while on the way to Vṛndāvana, He visited His birthplace, Navadvīpa, where He saw His mother and gave His slippers to Śrī Viṣṇupriyādevī. From there, Śrī Mahāprabhu went to Vṛndāvana.

After accepting *sannyāsa*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu traveled to the holy places of pilgrimage in South India for six years, and then for the final eighteen years of His life, He resided at Jagannātha Purī. This last part of His life is called Antya-līlā.

Once, junior Haridāsa went to Mādhavīdevī's house to beg for some rice for Mahāprabhu's lunch. When Śrī Mahāprabhu came to know of this, He rejected Haridāsa, considering that no one in the renounced order of life should have any connection with women. Haridāsa atoned by entering the water at Trivenī in Prayāga.

When a servant of Śrī Advaitācārya

requested financial support from the King of Purī, Śrī Mahāprabhu would not allow him into His association. The devotees understood that to earn money for one's maintenance in the name of devotional service is condemned.

During His final twelve years, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu remained in a state of ecstatic madness in the association of His most intimate associates at the Gambhirā at Jagannātha Purī. This is a solitary room near the house of Kāśī Miśra, who was the priest of the King of Purī. During this period, He remained absorbed in a mood of separation from Kṛṣṇa, like that exhibited by the *gopīs*.

One evening, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu suddenly rushed to the Jagannātha Temple and in front of everyone entered the Deity room. At that time, the door of the temple automatically closed as the moving Jagannātha merged into the body of the stationary Jagannātha.

❀ Text 73 ❀

❀ Śrī Sūradāsa ❀

Who is the poet whose head will not swoon in ecstasy after hearing the poetry of Śrī Sūradāsa? His poetry and songs contained very beautiful glorification of the Lord in a joking mood, making them unique in their way of presentation in very simple language. His words expressed his spontaneous love

and attachment for the Lord, and indeed, each and every line of his poetry was full of grave meaning. With his divine vision, the pastimes of the Lord were reflected in his heart and then manifested in his writings. As a result, he was able to describe the Supreme Lord's appearance, activities, qualities, and pastimes in a most attractive and poetic manner. When one hears Śrī Sūradāsa's descriptions of the Lord's appearance, activities, forms, and qualities, which are imbued with love and devotion, his intelligence is awakened as he aspires to cultivate a devotional life.

❁ Additional Commentary ❁

Śrī Sūradāsa was an incarnation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's friend, Śrī Uddhava. Once, Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were sitting in a grove, thinking about the deliverance of the people of this world. At that time, Śrī Kṛṣṇa ordered the *gopī*, Lalitā, not to allow anyone to come and disturb Them. Just then, Śrī Uddhava arrived, hoping to see Lord Kṛṣṇa and so Lalitā forbade him from entering the grove. In anger, Śrī Uddhava cursed Lalitā to take birth in this mortal world in the house of a *yavana*. Lalitā counter-cursed Uddhava, saying, "You will also take birth on the earth as a blind person."

Later, when Lord Kṛṣṇa came to know about this, He pacified both of them and said to Uddhava, "All this has happened by My will. When both of you meet on the earth, Lalitā will come back to Me and you will

appear as Sūradāsa. After delivering many conditioned souls by singing the glories of the Lord, you will also come back to Me."

It is for this reason that Śrī Uddhava appeared as Śrī Sūradāsa and was well aware of the loving sentiments of the *gopīs* of Vraja. These sentiments permeate his descriptions of the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Sūradāsa appeared in a Sārasvata *brāhmaṇa* family in the village of Sihi (where King Janmejaya performed his famous snake sacrifice) near Delhi on Tuesday the 5th day of the waxing moon in the month of Vaiśākha in the year 1535 samvat era. He was blind from birth so that his parents had mixed feelings of happiness and distress.

Once, a rich client gave two gold coins to his father, who acted as a priest. His father brought the coins and kept them in a room, wrapped in a piece of cloth. By the arrangement of Providence, at night a mouse took those coins into its hole. In the morning, when his father could not find the gold coins, he became very sad because he was a poor *brāhmaṇa*. Śrī Sūradāsa explained to him that he should not feel sad and that he should remember the Supreme Lord, who would certainly reward him again.

The father became very angry upon hearing this remark. He said, "You unfortunate fellow, from the day you were born, I have become impoverished."

Śrī Sūradāsa said, "My dear father, you can get back your coins but under one condition, and that is that you will not force me to stay at home any longer."

His father said, "All right, let me get back my coins and you can go wherever you want."

With his divine vision, Śrī Sūradāsa saw where the gold coins were. He informed his father and then left home. Seeing his son's magical power, his father wanted to stop him but Śrī Sūradāsa said, "If you stop me, you will again lose your coins." Thus his father refrained from stopping his son from leaving home.

Śrī Sūradāsa left home and went to the jungle. There he disclosed the whereabouts of a *brāhmaṇa*'s ten lost cows. In return, the *brāhmaṇa* kept him at his place and served him nicely. After a few days, Śrī Sūradāsa quietly left that place and went to Viśrāma-gṛhāṭa at Mathurā. He stayed there for a few days and then went to place called Gaughāṭa, which is situated on the shore of the Yamunā in the village of Runakata.

Being attracted by his melodious singing, divine qualities, and devotion for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, many people became his disciples and he became known as Svāmijī.

Once, as Śrī Vallabhācārya was returning to Vraja from Prayāga, his disciples made their camp near Gaughāṭa. When Śrī Sūradāsa heard his name from some people, he went to have his *darśana*.

Śrī Vallabhācārya requested, "O Sūradāsa, please sing a song in glorification of the Supreme Lord."

Śrī Sūradāsa very humbly sang a song that glorified the Lord's compassion. Śrī Ācārya said, "You are very expert in worshiping the

Lord and so why are you feeling yourself to be so low?"

Śrī Sūradāsa replied, "O master, I have not yet had a vision of the pastimes of the Lord."

Śrī Vallabhācārya then asked Śrī Sūradāsa to go and bathe in the Yamunā. Later on, he initiated Śrī Sūradāsa into the chanting of the eighteen syllable *mantra* according to the prescribed rules and regulations. He also instructed him in his commentary on the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. By the mercy of his spiritual master, Śrī Sūradāsa developed such intense love and devotion for the Supreme Lord that he began to perceive the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, he had the divine *darśana* of Lord Bāla Kṛṣṇa playing on the lap of his spiritual master.

Thereafter, Śrī Sūradāsa composed and sang many songs in glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa. His spiritual master stayed at Gaughāṭa for three days and instructed him in his *Subodhini-tikā* on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and the *Puruṣottama-sahasra-nāma*.

Śrī Vallabhācārya then brought Śrī Sūradāsa to Gokula and showed him the Deity of Śrī Navanītapriya. He also gave Sūradāsa the service of daily glorifying the names and qualities of the Deity, Śrīnāthajī.

One day, Emperor Akbar heard a song composed by Śrī Sūradāsa from the mouth of Tānasena, who was called the King of music. Being very pleased with the song, Akbar went to Mathurā, met Sūradāsa, and heard him sing many of his songs. In his songs, Śrī Sūradāsa explains that everyone has eyes, but their eyes are not hankering after the

beautiful form of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The eyes that can see the Supreme Lord are divine.

Akbar was very pleased and he wanted to give him many presents but Śrī Sūradāsa did not accept anything. One day, Emperor Akbar asked Śrī Sūradāsa, “Which are superior—your songs or the poetry of Śrī Tulasīdāsa?”

Śrī Sūradāsa replied, “From the poetic standpoint, mine are better, but Śrī Tulasīdāsa’s words are not mere poetry—they are *mantras*.

Emperor Akbar had many queens and one of them was a Hindu. Her name was Jodhābāi. One day she found a beautiful little girl while taking bath in the Yamunā and she adopted her and maintained her as her own daughter. When that girl turned twelve, she dressed herself beautifully, and while standing at the top of the palace, she looked towards the Yamunā, searching for her Lord.

When Jodhābāi insisted that she explain her behavior, the girl said, “I stand here every day because I want to have the *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and no one else during my lifetime.”

When Jodhābāi insisted that she would never attain the *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the girl heard the sound of His flute. One day, this beautiful, young daughter very nicely dressed and decorated Jodhābāi. When Akbar saw his wife, he was pleased and asked who had dressed her in this way.

Jodhābāi said, “I have an adopted daughter, and it is she who has dressed and decorated me so beautifully. After hearing

this, Akbar decided to marry that girl, but suddenly he felt an unbearable pain. Even though he was attended to by the best of physicians and given the best treatment, his pain continued unabated.

Birbal then told Akbar, “This kind of pain with a burning sensation can only be relieved by the mercy of a great saintly person.”

Thus Śrī Sūradāsa was brought from Vraja, and simply by respectfully greeting this saintly devotee, Akbar’s pain soon vanished. When Emperor Akbar inquired about this, Śrī Sūradāsa said, “Your pain was caused by a mental imbalance. This adopted daughter is Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s dear *gopī*, Lalitā.”

As proof of this statement, the palace ladies saw a black spot on the girl’s thigh and the reflection of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s face in her mouth. Akbar was very eager to see the girl and so she was brought into the royal court. When she came, Śrī Sūradāsa asked, “O Lalitā, please reveal yourself to the Emperor.”

The girl replied, “O Uddhava, why have you come here, leaving aside your Śyāma?”

After saying this, the young girl burnt her body in the fire of yoga and returned to the abode of Kṛṣṇa. Still, Śrī Sūradāsa did not leave his body, by the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrī Sūradāsa was a devotee and poet by birth. In his poetry, both devotional sentiments and poetic ornaments are abundantly displayed. He would perceive the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and immediately compose his poetry and sing his songs.

Once, Śrī Sūradāsa fell into a dry well. The

Lord personally came and picked him up, and gave him His *darśana*, along with His consort. Although born blind, his suddenly opened and he was able to see. Still, Śrī Sūradāsa requested, “My dear Lord, I do not wish to use the eyes with which I have had Your *darśana* to see this illusory world. Therefore kindly make me blind as I was before.”

Thus, Śrī Sūradāsa again lost his vision. During the latter part of his life, Śrī Sūradāsa resided at Candra-sarovara at the village of Pārāsauli. There was a young boy named Gopāla who served him. One day, as Śrī Sūradāsa was having his meal, the boy forgot to bring water and went somewhere else. Actually, it was Lord Śrīnāthajī who then brought him a golden pitcher filled with water.

Later on, when this fact became known, Śrī Sūradāsa said, “Śrīnāthajī is the real Gopāla.” He was very happy to experience this kindness of Śrīnāthajī. The Lord’s temple was situated at the top of Govardhana Hill, and at the bottom there was a village called Gopālapura, which is now known as Jatipura.

There lived a greedy businessman in Jatipura. He was sixty years old, and yet he never went to have the *darśana* of Lord Śrīnāthajī during his entire life. He would always say that he receives the news of the Lord’s dresses and ornaments from the devotees. In this way, he would praise Śrīnāthajī to his many customers so that his business was very nicely conducted. He

wore neck beads and put on *tilaka* without taking initiation from any of the Gosvāmīs. He dressed in that way just to attract more customers who would then treat him like a Vaiṣṇava.

One day, the businessman chastised Śrī Sūradāsa in connection with the selling of his products. Śrī Sūradāsa warned him, saying, I know your real identity and I will expose you. I know what kind of Vaiṣṇava you are. Come with me now to have the *darśana* of Śrīnāthajī; otherwise, I will publicly expose you.”

Although the businessman gave so many excuses, Śrī Sūradāsa was finally able to convince him to go and have the *darśana* of Śrīnāthajī. In fact, he also arranged for his spiritual initiation. Thereafter, having a change of heart, the greedy businessman spent all of his wealth in the service of the Lord and His devotees.

Śrī Sūradāsa had a desire to compose one hundred and twenty-five thousand songs. After he finished writing about a hundred thousand songs, the Lord ordered him to come back to His abode. However, Śrī Sūradāsa replied that his desire had not yet been fulfilled. Hearing this, the Lord said, “The remaining twenty-five thousand songs have been written by Me and should be presented as written by Sūraśyāma.”

At the very end of his life, Śrī Sūradāsa’s body became very frail as he continued residing at Candra-sarovara, from where he could see the flag atop Lord Śrīnāthajī’s temple. During the last days of his life, many

Vaiṣṇavas visited Śrī Sūradāsa.

Once, a devotee named Caturbhuja Dāsa humbly said to Śrī Sūradāsa, “O Mahārāja you have sung the glories of the Lord to such a great extent, but you have not sung the glories of your spiritual master.”

Śrī Sūradāsa replied, “I don’t make any distinction between the spiritual master and the Supreme Lord.” He also wrote a song confirming this statement. Finally, while remembering the abode of Vraja and offering obeisances to the *dhāma*, he left this world and entered the eternal pastimes of the Lord.

❀ Text 74 ❀

❀ Śrī Paramānanda Dāsa ❀

Just as the *gopīs* of Vraja had intense attachment for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who appeared at the end of the Dvāpara-yuga, such loving attachment was found in Śrī Paramānanda Dāsa in Kali-yuga. He composed and sang many songs dedicated to Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes of childhood and youth hood. This is not at all astonishing because he was a friend of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s during the Lord’s Dvāpara-yuga appearance.

Tears of ecstatic love would constantly flow from Śrī Paramānanda Dāsa’s eyes, and the hairs of his body would stand on end. Because of ecstatic love of God, his magnanimous voice would become choked. He was a very

liberal devotee. His mood, body, and heart were constantly decorated with the beauty of love for Śrī Śyāmasundara. Because he composed many songs in the *sāraṅga raga*, he was known as Sāraṅga. Simply by hearing his songs, one becomes absorbed in love of God.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Paramānanda Dāsa appeared on the seventh day of the waxing moon in the month of Agraḥāyana in 1550 Samvat era in a brāhmaṇa family at Kannauja. From his childhood, he had great love for music and the Supreme Lord. Once, he visited Prayāga on the occasion of Makara Saṅkrānti. Śrī Vallabhācārya’s servant, Kapoor Kṣatriya Jalaghariya, heard his *kīrtana* and informed his master. Śrī Vallabhācārya understood this person to be a divine personality.

Śrī Paramānanda saw the form of child Bāla-Kṛṣṇa known as Śrī Navanīta-priya in the lap of Jalaghariya. Śrī Paramānanda spent most of his time in Vraja, as he had great love and devotion for this transcendental abode. By the mercy of his spiritual master, he sang a variety of songs about the pastimes of the Supreme Lord. He had the opportunity to perform *kīrtana* in the temple of Śrīnāthaji every day. He resided next to Surabhikuṇḍa.

Once, after hearing Śrī Paramānanda Dāsa’s beautiful song, Śrī Vallabhācārya fell unconscious and remained so for three days.

Śrī Paramānanda Dāsa did not leave

Gokula and Govardhana and go elsewhere during his entire life. He left this world on the ninth day of the waning moon in the month of Bhādra in 1941 Samvat Era.

❀ Text 75 ❀

❀ Ś r i K e ś a v a B h a ṭ ṭ a ❀

Ś r i K e ś a v a B h a ṭ ṭ a was the crest jewel among human beings. His glories were spread throughout the world. His name bore the title Kāśmīrī. He delivered people from their sinful life and was a decoration on the surface of the earth. He was like a strong axe of devotion to Lord Hari. In other words, he cut down the trees of atheistic religious systems by spreading the glories of devotional service to the Lord. After seeing the atrocities committed by the *yavanas* in Mathurā, he subdued them by debating with them. Many powerful Kāzis became frightened of him after by witnessing his influence and seeing his miracle. His fame is befitting and is known throughout the world.

❀ Commentary ❀

Ś r i K e ś a v a B h a ṭ ṭ a was a learned scholar. On the strength of his learning, he traveled from one country to another and defeated all the learned scholars, thus establishing his own conclusions. He effortlessly defeated all the great scholars, thus creating a great fear

within their hearts. While traveling, he rode in a palanquin and was accompanied by many learned scholars, servants, disciples, elephants, and horses. His fame spread everywhere.

While traveling and conquering other learned scholars, Ś r i K e ś a v a B h a ṭ ṭ a once arrived at Navadvīpa. There also he tried to display his poetic influence and prowess of debate. The learned scholars of Navadvīpa were very much afraid of him. Ś r i K ṛ ṣ ṇ a Caitanya Mahāprabhu, thinking how He could remove the fear of the *brāhmaṇas* and deliver Ś r i K e ś a v a B h a ṭ ṭ a from the clutches of dry arguments and debates and allow him to relish the nectar of devotional service, enacted one of His blissful pastimes. Thus He, along with His students, went and sat on the pleasant shore of the Gaṅgā.

Ś r i Mahāprabhu began discuss the scriptures with His students. At that time, Ś r i K e ś a v a B h a ṭ ṭ a arrived there and sat near Mahāprabhu. Ś r i Mahāprabhu very humbly said, “Your good fame has spread all over the world and so I have a desire to hear some scriptural discussion from your mouth.”

Ś r i K e ś a v a B h a ṭ ṭ a said, “You are just a small boy, and You study with other boys, but you talk is like that of an experienced person. By seeing your humility and gentleness, I am very pleased with You. Tell me what You wish to hear.”

Ś r i Mahāprabhu said, “Kindly describe the glories of Ś r i Gaṅgā.”

Ś r i K e ś a v a B h a ṭ ṭ a said, “The glories of the Gaṅgā are present right before Your eyes.”

Śrī Mahāprabhu again requested, “We wish to hear about this from your mouth in your poetic language.”

Thereafter, Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa quickly composed one hundred verses and recited them like a raging storm. Śrī Mahāprabhu was certainly impressed by his skill and remarkable presentation. Still, He recited one of those verses and requested Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa to explain its faults and qualities. Upon witnessing Śrī Mahāprabhu’s extraordinary memory, Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa was astonished and asked, “How could You memorise the verse I recited?”

Śrī Mahāprabhu humbly replied, “The same person who has given you the wonderful power of composing verses has given Me the extraordinary power to remember them. Simply by His mercy, you, Me, and everyone else lives.”

Śrī Mahāprabhu again requested Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa to describe the faults and qualities of the verse. However, feeling somewhat depressed, Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa said, “How can You say that there is some fault in my composition?”

Śrī Mahāprabhu replied, “There naturally must be some tinge of fault, even in the best of literary works. If you permit Me then I will describe the faults and qualities of your verse.”

When Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa agreed to this, Śrī Mahāprabhu described five principal faults and good qualities found in the verse. Indeed, Śrī Mahāprabhu gave a wonderful explanation of the verse so that Śrī Keśava

Bhaṭṭa became struck with wonder. Finally, he said, “Oh! Oh! Let us meet again tomorrow so that we can discuss these things further.”

Saying this, Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa returned to his residence, where he sat down in a solitary place and meditated on goddess Sarasvatī. The goddess then appeared before him in the form of a young girl. Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa prayed with a choked up voice, “You had empowered me to conquer the entire world of scholars, but now you had me defeated by a young boy.”

Goddess Sarasvatī said, “He is not an ordinary boy. He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, descended upon the earth. He is the maintainer of all living entities, and He is my Lord. I have no power to stand before Him and argue. Alas! How fortunate you are to have had the *darśana* of the Lord, who is inaccessible to the mind, words, and senses. Simply by His remembrance, the mind becomes filled with joy.”

Hearing these words of goddess Sarasvatī containing the most essential truth, Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa became joyful. Then next morning, he went to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, having given up his proclivity for dry arguments and debates. He surrendered himself at the Lord’s lotus feet and prayed to Him with utmost humility.

Śrī Mahāprabhu mercifully instructed Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa to give up the path of dry arguments and mental speculation and instead relish the mellows of devotional service, which is life’s ultimate goal. Śrī Keśava

Bhaṭṭaji took these words of Mahāprabhu into his heart and completely gave up the spirit of conquering the four directions by utilizing his poetic skill and knowledge of the scriptures. He merged himself into the bliss of unalloyed devotional service. Later on, when he heard about how the *yavanas* of Mathurā were tormenting innocent people, he went there and protected the Vaiṣṇava religion by driving away the miscreants.

Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa was originally from Kashmir. Once, he heard that a group of *yavanas* were residing at Viśrāma-ghāṭa at Mathurā. They had set up a clinic at the main entrance of Mathurā and anyone who would come there would be forcibly circumcised. The Muslims would run and grab newcomers and afterwards say, “Look! Now you have become a Muslim.”

Those persons would feel terribly embarrassed while seeing that they had become circumcised. In this way, the Muslims forcibly converted Hindus to their religion. In order to protect the Hindu religion, Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa, accompanied by his one thousand disciples, went to Śrī Mathurā and sat underneath the machine used for circumcism. He was a powerful personality possessing the potency of the Sudarśana *cakra*.

The *yavanas* tried to forcibly convert Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa and his disciples, but the only result was that they were severely and angrily chastised. The *yavanas* approached their leader and complained about Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa and so a huge army was

sent for the *yavanas*’ protection. However, by the prowess and influence of Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa, the army was defeated. Then, being ordered by Śrī Keśava Bhaṭṭa, his disciples thrashed the *yavanas* and threw them into the Yamunā.

❀ Text 76 ❀

❀ Śrī Bhaṭṭa ❀

Śrī Bhaṭṭa, a valiant hero who conquered the enemies of lust, anger, and greed, manifested the unending mellows of the highest conjugal *rasa*. He appeared like a cloud in the sky, showering pleasure onto the minds of the exalted devotees by his presentation of blissful songs and poetry. His songs gave happiness to the devotees and revealed the enchanting personalities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the beauty of Their nectarean pastimes. Simply by hearing his compositions, the hearts of the devotees become filled with a shower of sweetness. His fame as a poet spread throughout the world.

In order to liberate the conditioned souls from the ocean of material existence, he distributed devotional service to everyone without discrimination. Even today, the moonlight of his great fame dissipates the darkness of ignorance, atheistic views, and useless labor from the hearts of those who are suffering in material existence. He was

constantly absorbed in the worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the abode of bliss and the son of Nanda Mahārāja, and Śrī Rādhikā, the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu.

❀ **Additional Commentary** ❀

Śrī Bhaṭṭācārya was a disciple of Keśava Bhaṭṭa. By the mercy of his spiritual master, Śrī Bhaṭṭācārya composed one hundred śatakas describing the confidential pastimes of the Divine Couple in the groves of Vṛndāvana. Later on, realizing that the people of Kali-yuga were not qualified to hear about such confidential pastimes, he threw those śatakas in the Yamunā. Śrī Yamunā took all of his songs, except one hundred songs which are known in the society of devotees as *Yugala-śataka*.

❀ **Text 77** ❀

❀ **Śrī Harivyāsadeva** ❀

By the power and influence of serving the Supreme Lord, Śrī Harivyāsadeva became the instructing spiritual master of a celestial goddess. Thus the goddess, who roamed the sky by her divine prowess, became a disciple of a human being. This fact is certainly astonishing, but it is true and known throughout the world. The devotees take pleasure in glorifying this achievement of Śrī Harivyāsadeva.

Śrī Harivyāsadeva was always found in the association the foremost of great souls who are devoted to the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa and thus detached from material existence. In the midst of these renounced devotees, he appeared as attractive as Mahārāja Janaka, the King of Videha, surrounded by the Nava-yogendras. By the prowess attained by the touch of the particles of dust from the lotus feet of his spiritual master, Śrī Bhaṭṭādevācārya, people of all classes bowed their heads before him.

❀ **Commentary** ❀

Once, Śrī Harivyāsadeva, along with some other devotees, went to the village of Catathabal. In that village he was very pleased to see a nice garden with a pond and so he stopped there to spend some time. He bathed, worshiped the Supreme Lord, and then decided to cook his meal. There was a temple of a goddess in that garden. As Śrī Harivyāsadeva was camping there, someone brought a goat to that temple of the goddess and sacrificed it in front of her.

Seeing this ghastly act, Śrī Harivyāsadeva felt very unhappy. He thought, "What to speak of cooking and offering foodstuffs to the Lord in such a place, it is not even proper to drink water here."

Having made up their minds in this way, all the devotees abstained from all food and drink. The entire day passed in this way and then night arrived. The devotees fasted while remembering Lord Hari throughout

the entire day and night. Because of this offense, the prowess of the goddess became diminished, and indeed, she became conquered by their devotional austerities. Being fearful, she assumed a human form and came before Śrī Harivyāsadeva and his associates. Simply by having the *darśana* of Śrī Harivyāsadeva, the goddess regained her power.

The goddess very humbly said, "Please cook your meal here. Why are you sitting here hungry?"

Śrī Harivyāsadeva said, "After coming here, we wanted to cook, but after seeing the ghastly worship performed here, our minds changed."

The goddess said, "I am the goddess who is worshiped here and so I am the one who has put you into difficulty, making you fast throughout the day and night. Today I have witnessed the power of your devotion and so kindly bestow such devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead upon me and make me your disciple."

After hearing this appeal of the goddess, Śrī Harivyāsadeva initiated her into the devotional line. Immediately after receiving *mantras* and instructions from her guru, the goddess, in a subtle form, hurried to the village and threw the king onto the floor. She then sat on his chest and declared, "I have become a disciple of Śrī Harivyāsadeva. Go to him without delay and also become his disciple. If you do not accept his subordination then I will kill all of you."

After hearing about this stern order of

the goddess, many sinful people fearfully approached Śrī Harivyāsadeva and took initiation from him. They all felt as if they had attained a new life and a new body. By the mercy of their spiritual master, those people became freed from all sufferings, which are the fruits of sinful activities.

In this way, Śrī Harivyāsadeva delivered many cruel and violent people from material existence by instructing them how to perform devotional service to the Lord. Śrī Harivyāsadeva remained in that village for some time, preaching to everyone the glories of devotional service, the science of worshipping the Supreme Lord, and the sublime goal of devotional life. His worshipable Deity was offered varieties of foodstuffs during the day so that his associates enjoyed sumptuous *prasāda*.

One day, a faithful dog-eater came to see him and prayed for his deliverance. By the mercy Śrī Harivyāsadeva, he received the seed of devotional service, which is the essence of all *sādhana*s, along with the remnants of foodstuffs from the devotees.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Harivyāsadeva appeared in a Gauḍa *brāhmaṇa* family. He accepted Vaiṣṇava initiation from Śrī Bhaṭṭadevacārya of the Śrī Nimbārka *sampradāya*. When he was initiated, his spiritual master asked, "Do you see anyone on my lap?"

Śrī Harivyāsadeva replied, "No." His spiritual master then instructed him to go

to Govardhana Hill and circumambulate it for twelve years. When he returned after completing this vow, his spiritual master asked him the same question and Śrī Harivyāsadeva gave the same answer. His spiritual master again gave him the same instruction and so Śrī Harivyāsadeva went back and circumambulated Govardhana Hill for twelve more years. Thereafter, he had the *darśana* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa on the lap of his spiritual master. Only then he was awarded spiritual initiation.

Śrī Harivyāsadeva's songbook, known as *Mahāvāṇī* is very famous. This book describes the importance of devotional service, observing festivals, the *rasa* of conjugal love, and devotion with spontaneous attraction.

One day, as Śrī Harivyāsadeva was bathing his śalagrāma-śila in the Yamunā, it suddenly slipped from his hands and was swept away by the river's strong currents. Because of this negligence, and due to feeling separation from the Lord, Śrī Harivyāsadeva stopped eating and drinking altogether. The Lord then ordered him in a dream, saying, "I am sitting on a rose under a *kadamba* tree near Svāmī-ghāṭa at Mathurā."

Śrī Harivyāsadeva went there and saw the Lord so that he again began to accept food and water.

❁ Text 78 ❁

❁ Śrī Divākara ❁

In order to dissipate the darkness of ignorance from the hearts of the conditioned souls, Śrī Divākara appeared within this world like a second sun. He instructed many powerful, lion-like kings and brought them to the path of devotional service. These kings voluntarily followed his instructions and advice. Just as a tree becomes bent by the burden of its ripened fruit, Śrī Divākara appeared extremely humble and decorated with all good qualities. He would very gently nurture the devotees by giving them *prasāda* and good instructions. His life was dedicated to working for the benefit of all living entities. While speaking, he would always utter the word *bhōlārāma*. He was everyone's well-wisher and was always kind to all living entities. He accepted the dust from the feet of the devotees as life's greatest gift. Throughout his life, he glorified the transcendental qualities of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Rāmacandra. His father, Śrī Karmaçandra, resembled Prajāpati Śrī Kaśyapa. It was said that the sun-god had appeared in his house as a devotee named Divākara

❁ Additional Commentary ❁

Śrī Divākara was a disciple of Śrī Agradevācārya. He had staunch faith in the service of saintly persons. Once, for the sake of serving the devotees, he mortgaged his

patched quilt. Then, because he could not repay his debt, he could not get back his quilt and so he suffered from cold during the winter. One cold, winter night, while he was chanting the holy names, Śrī Rāma appeared and gave Śrī Divākara a quilt to cover himself.

However, the merchant who had Śrī Divākara's patched quilt also took this quilt since he was unable to repay his debt. The Lord then gave him another quilt. When the merchant came to know of this, he understood it to be the mercy of the Supreme Lord and so he returned both quilts and became a disciple of Śrī Divākara Dasa. By his prowess gain by serving saintly devotees, many people became attracted to him and took initiation from him.

❀ Text 79 ❀

❀ Śrī Vithalanātha ❀

Śrī Vithalanātha enjoyed great happiness while affectionately taking care of the Deity, Śrī Bāla-kṛṣṇa, in the mood of Śrī Nanda Mahārāja, the King of Vraja. Every day he would sing different songs according to the time of day and offer delicious foodstuffs to his Deity. In this way, he would remain engaged in the service of his Lord throughout the entire day and night. He would personally dress his Deity, decorate Him with ornaments, and prepare His bed. Just as the house of Nanda Mahārāja

at Gokula was always filled with happiness during Dvāpara-yuga, Śrī Vithalanātha, an initiated *brāhmaṇa* from South India, made his house similarly glorious and delightful.

By seeing the opulence of the cowherd people of Gokula in Dvāpara-yuga, Indra became bewildered. Similar opulence was seen during the time of Śrī Vithalanātha. In other words, Śrī Vallabhācārya's son, Śrī Vithalanātha, transformed Kali-yuga into Dvāpara-yuga by the strength of his *bhajana*.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Vithalanātha was an incarnation of Lord Paṇḍarinātha and the second son of Śrī Vallabhācārya. He was born in 1572 Samvat Era at Chunāragaḍa, near Kāṣī. After completeing his studies, he married two girls, named Rukmiṇi and Padmāvatī. After the disappearance of his father, his elder brother, Śrī Gopīnātha, took over his sacred seat. However, within a short time, he also left this world, and because his son, Śrī Puruṣottama, was too young, Śrī Vithalanātha took over the service and worship of the Deity.

Later on, there was an argument between Śrī Vithalanātha and one of Śrī Vallabhācārya's disciples, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Adhikārī. As a result, the Adhikārī removed Śrī Vithalanātha from the service and replaced him with Śrī Puruṣottama. Being bereft of this service and the *darśana* of his dear Lord, He became despondent and left for the village of Parasouli, where he used

took the *darśana* of the temple flag.

Even though Adhikārī forbade him, the cook of the temple, Śrī Rāmadāsa, brought the Deities' *prasāda* to Śrī Vithalanātha every day. Every day, Śrī Vithalanātha would send a flower garland and a small paper with a verse written on it for the pleasure of the Lord, and the Lord would accept these.

One day, the Deity wrote a verse and sent it back. The verse read, "The clouds shower rain in time and so why are you anxious?"

Śrī Vithalanātha sent a reply with the cook. He wrote, "The cloud showers rain on time, but the *cātaka* bird never gives up its longing."

The temple administrators were impressed by Śrī Vithalanātha's behavior, and when they came to know about the misbehavior of the Adhikārī, they sent him to jail. Because Śrī Vithalanātha was an honest devotee, he had the Adhikārī released from the jail. Later on, the Adhikārī begged forgiveness from Śrī Vithalanātha. Still, because of his great offense, after death he had to remain as a ghost. Śrī Vithalanātha nevertheless delivered him from that condition.

Once, King Akbar's Hindu wife, Jodhābhāi, inquired from Śrī Vithalanātha about how she could control her husband. Śrī Vithalanātha advised her, saying, "There is no need for resorting to *mantras*, diplomatic devices, or evil practices. Simply follow the orders of your husband and he will automatically come under your control."

All the neighboring people became influenced by these instructions, which are

approved by the scriptures.

Śrī Vithalanātha had seven sons. At the time of departing from this world, he distributed his wealth and property to his seven sons and ordered them to spread the conclusions of Puṣṭi-mārga. During his last days, he stayed in a cave at Govardhana Hill. He gave his beads to his fourth son, Śrī Gopīnātha, and then entered the cave, never again to come out. In this way he entered the Lord's eternal pastimes in the year 1642 Samvat Era.

❁ Śrī Tripuradāsa ❁

Śrī Tripuradāsa was a *kāyastha*, but his heart was filled with a devotional mood. He had promised to send a thick quilt for the Deity, Śrīnāthajī, every winter. Accordingly, he made very costly quilts with cloth that was stitched with golden rings and sequens. It was not simply that his quilts were very costly, because they were also saturated with his unalloyed love and devotion for the Lord. Every year he would send an expensive, divine quilt for the Lord's service.

Lord Śrīnāthajī was very pleased by Śrī Tripuradāsa's service, and so was Śrī Vithalanātha, who would offer the quilt to the Lord. After some time, it so happened that the king took everything away from Śrī Tripuradāsa. Such was the arrangement of the Lord that every paise and food grain became a thing of great value for him. In fact, he didn't even have a proper arrangement

for food at his home. In due course, the winter season arrived and Śrī Tripuradāsa remembered his promise to prepare and send a valuable quilt to Śrīnāthajī. However, due to a lack of wealth, he could not perform that service, and because of the sorrow caused by breaking his promise, tears filled his eyes.

Śrī Tripuradāsa thought deeply about how he could keep his promise and thus continue to be engaged in the service of the Lord. Suddenly, he saw a brass pot in his house and so he considered that he was being assisted by the arrangement of the Lord. He decided to sell the pot and use the money for the service of the Deity.

Śrī Tripuradāsa sold the brass pot in the market and got a rupee for it. With that rupee he purchased a bundle of thick cloth, which he then dyed red. Though he only appeared to dye the cloth red, it became saturated with his pure attachment for the Lord and soaked with his tears of love and devotion. He then dried the cloth in the sunlight of his humility. Still, he didn't have the courage to give such an ordinary cloth to Śrī Vithalanātha so that it could be offered to the Deity. Therefore, he simply kept the cloth at home, thinking, "If anyone happens to come from Lord Śrīnāthajī, I will send it with him."

Then it so happened that Śrī Tripuradāsa saw a servant of Śrī Vithalanātha passing by and so he thought to send the cloth with him for the Lord's service. Śrī Tripuradāsa gave him the cloth and said, "Kindly give

this to the head *pujārī*. Although this cloth is not even fit to be used by the servants and maidservants of Śrī Vithalanātha, please take this insignificant present given by this humble soul. My only request is that Śrī Vithalanātha may not come to know about this gift."

The servant took Śrī Tripuradāsa's cloth and gave it to the head *pujārī*, who placed it on the altar so that the other opulent cloths used for dressing the Deity could be placed on it. However, the affectionate Lord could not tolerate the *pujārī's* negligence of His devotee's gift offered with unalloyed love and devotion.

The Lord said, "I am feeling very cold and quickly do something about this."

In response, Śrī Vithalanātha wrapped many opulent and beautiful cloths around the Lord, but He did not feel satisfied. The Lord again ordered Śrī Vithalanātha to do something to make Him feel warm. Finally, Śrī Vithalanātha lit a fire in the Deity room, but still the Lord did not feel warm. Again the Deity ordered the *pujārī* to do something. Śrī Vithalanātha felt embarrassed and began thinking about what should be done.

Then he remembered that sometimes the Lord performs pastimes just to display special mercy toward His dear devotee. Śrī Vithalanātha then called for a servant and asked if anyone had offered a new cloth especially for the winter. In response, the servant listed the names of various donors but omitted the name of Śrī Tripuradāsa.

Śrī Vithalanātha was surprised and so he

said, "You did not mention the name of Tripuradāsa? What happened to his annual offering? Didn't he offer a new cloth this year?"

The servant replied, "He lost all his money and so he could not prepare an opulent quilt. Instead, he has given a plain, thick cloth which I have put on the altar so that You can place the Deity's dresses upon it."

Śrī Vithalanātha was very experienced in the loving service of the Lord and so he understood the intention of the Deity. He very well knew that the Lord hankers after the love and devotion of His devotee, and not after the object given. He then ordered his servant to bring immediately bring him that cloth. The servant brought the cloth and Śrī Vithalanātha had the temple tailor to use it to prepare a *cādara* for the Lord. He then removed all the other quilts, put out the fire in the Deity room, and offered this *cādara* to the Lord.

Who can describe the happiness which the Deity felt by receiving this offering? By this pastime, the Lord has demonstrated how love and devotion to Him is more important than mere opulence of worship. From this pastime, all the devotees gained the conviction that Lord Śrīnāthajī has such love for His devotee.

❀ Text 80 ❀

❀ The sons of Śrī Vithalanātha ❀

The sons of Śrī Vithalanātha are non-different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the well-wisher of all living entities. Knowing this, one should meditate upon them. Their names were Śrī Giridhara, a great devotee who was very well-behaved; Śrī Govinda, whose nature was similar to that of his brother; Śrī Bāla-kṛṣṇa, who was a renowned personality; Śrī Gokuladāsa, who was very sober, Śrī Raghunātha and Śrī Yadunātha, who were both endowed with divine qualities; and Śrī Ghanaśyāma, who always remained absorbed in feelings of love for the Lord. Indeed, he was an elevated devotee in whose heart the remembrance of the Lord was always present.

All seven of these devotees were opulences of the Supreme Lord. They were all very expert in worshiping the Lord, and like the Lord, they worked to deliver the fallen souls of this world. It is everyone's duty to sing of their glories.

❀ Text 81 ❀

❀ Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa ❀

Being pleased with Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the lifter of Govardhana Hill, shared His name with him. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa was a

reservoir of divine qualities and a receptable of devotional service awarded to him by his spiritual master, Śrī Vallabhācārya. Poetry composed by him is unique and free from all kinds of literary faults. He was devoted to the service of Lord Śrīnāthajī. Even learned scholars praised his words because they were decorated with the auspicious fame of Śrī GiridharaṠgopāla. He considered decorating himself with the dust of Vraja as his ultimate goal of life. His regular practice was to smear the dust of Vraja over his head and all over his body. Indeed, he continually meditated on the dust of Vraja.

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa resided at and around the places near Govardhana Hill, which is the greatest among all the devotees of Lord Hari. He took a firm vow to engage in the service of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava without deviation.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa displayed unalloyed love of God by his execution of devotional service in practice, by his divine instructions, and by his compilation of devotional literatures. Lord Śrīnāthajī reciprocated with His loving exchanges, and the proof of that is that even today devotees all over the world sing of his glories.

The commentator, Śrī Priyādāsa, remembers one or two of his pastimes and says that once Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa went to Delhi for the service of Śrīnāthajī. There, he saw hot jalebies being fried in a market and so in his mind he offered some to his Lord

Śrīnāthajī. Out of love for his devotee, the Lord gladly accepted this offering. As a result, when the *pujāris* went to remove the offering plates from the Deity room, they found a plate of jalebies. Indeed, they saw Lord Śrīnāthajī holding some jalebies in His hand.

Another time, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa went to Agra, where he heard a prostitute melodiously singing in an exquisite *raga*. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa was very pleased to hear this and so he said to her, “Will you come with me and sing for our moon-faced Śrīlālajī?”

The prostitute, realizing that here was an honest devotee of the Lord who only saw the good in others, agreed to go with Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa took her without any hesitation and went to Govardhana Hill. He had the prostitute bathe nicely in the holy water of Girirāja, and then decorated her with beautiful garments, ornaments, fragrances, and flowers. Finally, he brought her to the temple of Śrīnāthajī and said, “Until now, you have pleased the men of this world but now you should try to satisfy our Śrīlālajī. If you do so, you will see what kind of personality He is.”

When the prostitute had the *darśana* of Śrīnāthajī, she felt jubilant and began melodiously singing to her best capacity. With her dancing, singing, and smiling, the prostitute attracted Śrīnāthajī’s attention and so He reciprocated with her. Indeed, she performed her dancing and singing gracefully and confidently. Because of her love and devotion for the Lord, her body

became slackened and she fell to the ground. Śrīnāthajī accepted her as a spirit soul engaged in His service.

Because the prostitute had so much love and devotion for the Lord, He reciprocated with her without considering her caste, social condition, activities, and so on. In this way, the Supreme Lord demonstrated His love for His devotees, and the devotees also demonstrated their love and devotion for the Supreme Lord.

Once, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa went to meet Śrī Sūradāsa. While they were discussing the songs they had composed, Śrī Sūradāsa asked, “You are very expert in writing poetry and so I request you to compose a song that in no way resembles mine.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa sang five or six songs, and while listening to them, Śrī Sūradāsa smiled. He then said, “In all of your songs there are similarities to my songs.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa felt embarrassed to hear this. Seeing this, Śrī Sūradāsa said, “There is no need to worry. Prepare a new poetic composition and tomorrow morning you can recite it to me.”

Returning home, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa was in anxiety because there that there was no devotional mood which was distinct from Śrī Sūradāsa’s mood. Lord Śrīnāthajī, the lifter of Govardhana Hill, understood Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa’s mind and the cause of his anxiety. Just to remove his anxiety, the Lord personally composed a very beautiful song and quietly placed it on Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa’s bed.

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa was merged into deep

thought, and when he went to his bed, he found the song written by the lotus hand of the Supreme Lord. Early the next morning, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa returned to Śrī Sūradāsa and recited the song. Śrī Sūradāsa did not simply become pleased, but also understood that the song could not have been composed by Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa, but was instead written by Śrīnāthajī Himself.

Considering the Lord to be partial, Śrī Sūradāsa became upset and stopped performing *kīrtana* in the temple of Śrīnāthajī. Later on, the Lord pacified him. In this way the loving exchanges between the devotees and the Supreme Lord continued. The song written by the Lord is even today sung daily in Śrīnāthajī’s temple.

One day, when he was very elderly, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa slipped and fell into a well and gave up his life. Although, by the prowess of his *bhajana*, he instantly received a spiritual body, ordinary people doubted why such an advance devotee should leave his body in such a way. Understanding this doubt of the people in general, the devotees felt unhappy.

Lord Śrīnāthajī is situated in everyone’s heart and thus understood the distress of the devotees. To relieve them of their distress, and to remove the doubt of the people, Śrīnāthajī showed them Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa’s spiritual form as a cowherd boy.

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa, in his spiritual body, walked at the foot of Govardhana Hill and spoke to some of the people there, saying, “Śrī Baladāu has gone ahead and I am following Him.” He also told them to give his regards

to Śrī Vithalanātha.

Thereafter, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa revealed the place where he had buried some wealth in his earthly body. The Vrajavāsīs went and repeated these statements of Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa to Śrī Vithalanātha, who then went to that place and found the wealth which had been buried there. From this incident it was clear that Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa actually met the Vrajavāsīs, and that he had not become degraded but had entered the Lord's eternal pastimes. Thus the mire of doubt was removed from the hearts of everyone so that they again became cheerful.

❀ Text 82 ❀

❀ Śrī Varddhamāna & Śrī Gaṅgalal ❀

Śrī Varddhamāna and Śrī Gaṅgalal were brothers that were just like two strong pillars supporting the edifice of devotional service. By reciting Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, they brought a river of nectar to the earth. By their *darśana*, touch, association, and divine instructions, they removed the sinful desires from the hearts of the people of this world. These two brothers' association destroyed the threefold miseries of material existence and awarded people great happiness. Both had great love and affection for the devotees, as well as compassion for the fallen souls. They were devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of Yaśodā. They were foremost amongst

the saintly persons and were very expert in rendering service to the Supreme Lord. They were the sons of Śrī Bhīma Bhaṭṭa, and they were very liberal by nature. Even in the fearful age of Kali, Śrī Varddhamāna & Śrī Gaṅgalal awarded the supreme destination to their disciples.

❀ Text 83 ❀

❀ Śrī Kṣema Gosvāmī ❀

By the influence and by the mercy of his spiritual master, Śrī Kṣema Gosvāmī became the true benefactor of all living entities. He was a staunch devotee of Lord Rāmacandra of the Raghu dynasty. Śrī Sītā-Rāma was his very life and soul. Other than his worshipable Lord, Śrī Kṣema Gosvāmī never thought of anyone, nor did not worship or meditate upon any of the demigods and goddesses. He was very fond of his worshipable Lord Śrī Rāma's bow and arrow. Through his meditation, he was constantly connected to Śrī Sītā-Rāma, never leaving their association for even a moment. He was a powerful personality like Śrī Hanumān; a staunch worshiper who was full of love for his Lord.

❀ Text 84 ❀

❀ Śrī Vitthaladāsa ❀

Śrī Vitthaladāsa was the crest jewel of the *caturvedi brāhmaṇas* of Mathurā. He was free from false pride and always ready to give respect to others. His body was decorated with markings of *tilaka* and *tulasī* neck beads as befitting a Vaiṣṇava. He would always see the good qualities in others while overlooking their faults. Throughout his life, Śrī Vitthaladāsa sang the glories of the devotees. He was a simple-minded person and was self-satisfied. He engaged in working for the welfare of others. During a festival in relation with the Lord, he sacrificed his son, an act which is impossible for others. He would regularly chant “Hari, Govinda, Jai Jai Govinda,” Everyone would feel happy while hearing his chanting.

❀ Commentary ❀

Among the *caturvedi brāhmaṇas* of Mathurā, two brothers became priests of the King of Udaipur. Once, these brothers fought over their shares of wealth and became grievously injured so that after about three hours, both of them died.

Śrī Vitthaladāsa was the son of one of these *brāhmaṇas*. From his childhood, he placed the Supreme Lord, the abode of bliss, within his heart. He constantly rendered service to Lord Śyāmasundara. Thus, even

at a young age, he became decorated with transcendental qualities.

One day, the King gave this order in the royal assembly: “After the death of his father, the young *brāhmaṇa* never comes to the royal assembly. Go and bring him without delay.”

The royal officers went to Śrī Vitthaladāsa’s house and informed him of the king’s order. They said, “You must come with us. The king will provide all of your needs and fulfill all of your desires.”

Śrī Vitthaladāsa said, “By the mercy of the Supreme Lord, all my desires are already fulfilled. Therefore I do not wish to go anywhere, leaving aside the service of my Lord.”

The royal officers returned and informed the king of Śrī Vitthaladāsa’s response. Someone said to the king, “Śrī Vitthaladāsa is a loving devotee of the Lord and he always sings the glories of the Lord and dances in ecstasy in the association of other devotees.”

The King summoned Śrī Vitthaladāsa again, asking him to perform *saṅkīrtana* in his palace that night. Śrī Vitthaladāsa, along with some other devotees, went to the king’s palace. They were all very humble and full of love for the Lord. Being the leader of those devotees, Śrī Vitthaladāsa shone in their midst. As soon as the king saw him, he stood up and greeted him respectfully.

Being instigated by some evil-minded people, just to test Śrī Vitthaladāsa’s love for the Lord, the King arranged for all-night *saṅkīrtana* on the roof of his three story

palace. All the devotees began chanting and dancing with love and devotion. Śrī Vitthaladāsa became so absorbed in the singing and dancing that he lost external consciousness and fell from the roof to the ground. Seeing this, the King became frightened so that his mouth dried up.

The King chastised the sinful persons who had urged him to have the devotees chant and dance on the rooftop, and he condemned himself for this great offense. The devotees carried Śrī Vitthaladāsa and returned home. The King gave much wealth to Śrī Vitthaladāsa's old mother while for three days he appeared to remain in a coma. Then after three days, when the devotees tried to arouse him, he returned to external consciousness and sat up. By the mercy of the Lord, there were no injuries on his body. He was not actually in a coma, but in a trance of love of God.

When Śrī Vitthaladāsa regained consciousness, his mother told him about the king's gifts. Feeling distressed at heart due to realizing the futility of materialistic life, and also feeling himself unfit for the service of Śrī Hari, he left home in the dead of night. While roaming here and there, he arrived at the village of Chatikara, where he began rendering service to Lord Śrī Garuḍa Govinda. Whenever he gazed at the Deity, his heart became filled with love and devotion.

Officers sent by the king tried their best to find him, but they could not. Finally, his mother and wife came to Chatikara and

cried loudly in the Garuḍa Govinda temple. They tried their best to take Śrī Vitthaladāsa back home, but he did not pay any attention to their words. Finally, his family members remained with him at Chatikara.

Once, while staying at Chatikara, Śrī Vitthaladāsa became very ill so that it became difficult for him to maintain himself, along with his mother and wife. Seeing Śrī Vitthaladāsa's distress, Śrī Garuḍa Govinda ordered him in a dream, saying that he should go to Mathurā. Indeed, the Lord ordered him in this way for three nights. Finally, Śrī Vitthaladāsa took his mother and wife and went to Mathurā, where many people of his caste lived. Still, he found the place and people to possess a different mood.

Finally, Śrī Vitthaladāsa found someone who was always fond of associating with devotees. Seeing this person's gentle nature, Śrī Vitthaladāsa began residing in his house. At that time, his wife was pregnant. Being impoverished, the chaste woman was filled with anxiety.

One day, by the arrangement of Providence, as Śrī Vitthaladāsa was digging in the ground at his house, he found some buried wealth, and also a Deity of the Supreme Lord. The honest Śrī Vitthaladāsa called for his landlord and said, "Look, I have found this wealth and Deity buried in the ground at your house. Take these things."

However, the landlord offered his obeisances to Śrī Vitthaladāsa and said, "You must keep this wealth and use it in the service of the Deity. In this way, you can live

happily by constantly seeing the beautiful face of the Lord. I am happy simply by having your *darśana* and association.”

❀ Text 84 ❀

❀ Śrī Śrīharirāma Haṭhīle ❀

By the power of his *bhajana*, Śrī Śrīharirāma Haṭhīle fearlessly argued and counter-argued with the King of Chittora. He was a very influential, magnanimous, and pure-hearted soul. He was an abode of love and devotion for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Because of his affection for the Lord, his voice remained choked up. While conversing, he would stress the gravity of offending devotees, and the terrible results of that offense. While speaking on this subject, he would often bring up the example of Hiraṇyakaśipu and Prahlāda. He was always straightforward in his speech, and even in the royal court, he would fearlessly challenge the king.

❀ Commentary ❀

There was a *sannyāsī* who was a good friend of the King of Chittora. Together, they would play games like backgammon. Utilizing the prowess of the king, that *sannyāsī* forcibly took away some land from a Vaiṣṇava. The devotee approached the king and demanded justice, but because the king was under the control of the *sannyāsī*, he

chastised the devotee and drove him away. The king ignored the devotee, treating him as if he was a liar.

Thereafter, the devotee went to Śrī Śrīharirāma Haṭhīle and narrated the entire incident to him. Śrī Śrīharirāma Haṭhīle treated the devotee like his own brother and talked to him very politely. After assuring him in various ways, Śrī Śrīharirāma Haṭhīle took the devotee and went to see the king. They had to wait a long time because the godless king had no respect for devotees.

Finally, Śrī Śrīharirāma Haṭhīle challenged the king, urging him to return the land that the *sannyāsī* had usurped from the devotee. When the king ignored his request, Śrī Śrīharirāma Haṭhīle fearlessly chastised the king, making him afraid of the sinful reactions awaiting him both in this life and the next. In this way, he had the land returned to the devotee.

❀ Text 86 ❀

❀ Śrī Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa ❀

The learned Śrī Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa hoisted the flag of Tattva-vāda in this world. In other words his ascertainment of the truth was unique and respected by all. He was very experienced in scriptural conclusions, the refutation of opposing elements, the removing of doubts, and providing solutions to life's dilemmas. Many great personalities

were his followers, giving him great honor.

Śrī Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa was the crest jewel of the Śrī Mādhva Gauḍeśvara *sampradāya*. Anyone who saw him considered him to be a replica of Śrī Mādhvācārya, the main ācārya of Brahmā-sampradāya. He accepted all the incarnations of the Lord as being plenary portions of the Lord and not partial expansions. His explanations of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam were based on the commentary of Śrī Vijayadhvaṇi. His words never contradicted the *Vedas*, other revealed scriptures, and the *Purāṇas*. His arms were decorated with tatoos of the symbols of Lord Viṣṇu, such as the conchshell.

Text 87

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa

The Supreme Lord rarely causes the descent of a devotee of the caliber of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, a staunch worshiper of the land of Vraja. All the holy places in Mathura-maṇḍala which are described in Śrī Varāha Purāṇa were forgotten in the course of time. Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa relocated and revealed those holy places and made them known throughout the world. He was a nectarean ocean of devotional mellows who benefitted others by giving them his association. He was the knower of the transcendental rasas, a firmly fixed-up devotee, and a suitable candidate for relishing the sweet pastimes

of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He refuted the paths of dry speculative knowledge and fruitive activities. There was no one else like him in his time who established the principles of devotional service.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa was an unalloyed devotee of Vrajabhūmī. He roamed here and there to the various villages in Vraja. Wherever he would go, he would first sit down and meditate on that place of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. In his meditation, Lord Kṛṣṇa would show him the exact places of His pastimes. In this way, he would discover the places of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vraja and then reveal this to others. He would say, "This particular place is where Lord Kṛṣṇa performed this pastime. This is the *kuṇḍa* where this pastime was performed, and this is the *tīrtha* where another pastimes was performed."

He would reveal to the people the pastimes of the Lord by acting them out in a dramatic way. He had a group of actors who would enact the pastimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa had performed in a particular place and thus reveal the pastimes to the people. Throughout Vraja, he enacted the *rāsa-līlā* pastimes. Seeing these performances, the devotees became very happy, as if receiving a new life.

Once, as he was residing at Mathurā during the month of Māgha, many people were preparing to go to Trivenī Prayāga to take a holy bath. Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa said to them, "There is no need to go to Prayāga.

Come with me and I will show you Trivenī here in Vraja.”

The people were surprised to hear his words and so they asked, “Where is Trivenī in Vraja?”

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa replied, “The holy *tīrtha*, Trivenī, is situated in Unchā Gāon.”

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa took the people to that place and personally dug up the earth to show them the three currents of the three rivers.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa was born on Nṛsimha *caturdaśī* in the month of Vaiśākha in 1588 Samvat Era. He was born as the son of Śrī Bhāskara Bhaṭṭa and Yaśomatī-devī, who belonged to the Bhṛgu dynasty in the city of Madurāi in South India. His elder brother was Gopāla Bhaṭṭa. In order to re-discover the lost holy places of Mathruā-maṇḍala, the Lord sent the great sage Nārada to appear as Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa.

In his childhood, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa studied the *Vedas* and Śrī Vedānta-sūtra from his uncle, Śrī Śaṅkara Bhaṭṭa. He completed his studies at the age of twelve. He compiled a book called *Vraja-dipikā*.

One day, after he had finished bathing in the Godāvarī River, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa appeared to Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa and ordered him, saying, “Go to Vraja and Our transcendental form will reveal to you all the confidential places of Our pastimes.”

After saying this, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa

manifested Themselves as the Deity named Laḍileya. Being ordered by the Lord, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa walked from his hometown and arrived at Govardhana Hill and Rādhā-kuṇḍa after two-and-a-half years.

At that time, Śrī Rādhā-Madana-mohana Deities were present at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa brahmacārī were engaged in Their service. When Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa arrived there at mid-day, the temple door automatically opened. Understanding that an associate of the Lord had arrived, the *brahmacārī* greeted him and imparted instructions to him on the order of Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī.

Later on, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa manifested the Deity of Śrī Revatīramana Baladeva at Unchā Gaon and personally served Him. After some time, he married on the order of his father and had a son named Dāmodara. He was celebrated in the society of devotees as Vrajācārya, and he compiled many books. Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa left this world on the appearance day of Lord Vāmanadeva.

❀ Text 88 ❀

❀ Śrī Vraja Vallabha ❀

Śrī Vraja Vallabha was everyone’s favorite because he gave the pleasure of the *rāsa-līlā* to everyone’s eyes. He was very expert in the arts of singing and dancing. In the enactment of the *rāsa-līlā* pastimes, he

would dance and sing beautifully and thus please Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, as well as the *gopīs*, headed by Śrī Lalitā. By nature he was very liberal and so his only endeavor was to deliver the conditioned souls from material existence. His fame was spread all over Vraja-maṇḍala. He arranged for grand festivals that were pleasing to everyone. He was a dear associate of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa.

❀ Text 89 ❀

❀ Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana ❀

The two brothers, Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana, renounced all types of material happiness and comforts as being no better than the straw in the street. Previously, they were royal ministers in the court of the King of Gauḍadeśa, West Bengal. They possessed all kinds of opulence, including horses, elephants, palaces, a huge treasury, and all other kinds of wealth.

Finally realizing the happiness of the material world to be temporary and therefore useless, they left everything and went to Śrī Vṛndāvana, where they continued to reside. There, they sustained their lives by whatever they could easily collect by the will of the Lord, and they were satisfied with whatever they obtained. They diverted their attention from royal opulence to the groves and forests of Vraja while exhibiting complete detachment from bodily sense enjoyment.

They renovated the forgotten holy places of Śrī Vrajabhūmi and compiled books revealing the confidential truths of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, thus giving great satisfaction to the devotees and delivering the people in general.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Nābhā became so absorbed in describing the renunciation of Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana that he described it in five lines of this verse. Then he realized that he did not describe the characteristics of their loving devotional service. Therefore, in the last line he described their glorious position in a condensed form, indicating that Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana were the ācāryas of relishing the mellows of devotional service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Their positions as ācāryas are also indicated by the author in the discussion of Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrī Nātha Bhaṭṭa.

It is befitting that the author has described Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana as being “two exalted personalities that were highly elevated on the path of *raga-bhakti*.” They had natural and spontaneous love and devotion for the Lord.

By the influence of time, almost all the holy places of Vraja-maṇḍala had been lost to the memory of the people. Therefore in those days no one knew the actual glories of Śrī Vṛndāvana and Śrī Braja-bhūmi. Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana excavated all the places of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in Vraja as they are described in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam by

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Their method of worshipping the Lord was fully in accordance with the teachings of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. They were highly elevated devotees who worshiped the Lord in *mādhurya-rasa*, which is the essence of all the *rasas*.

On the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana resided near Śrī Gopeśvara Mahādeva for some time, and by the Lord's mercy, they compiled many devotional literatures, which described the ways and means of engaging in the devotional service of the Lord. When one's mind and intelligence become absorbed in the discussions found in those literatures, one will feel spiritual ecstasy as tears of love flow from his eyes.

Once, as Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī was performing his *bhajana* at Kadamba Ter near Nandagram, his elder brother, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, came to see him from Vṛndāvana. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī thought, "Today I will prepare delicious sweet rice, and after offering it to the Lord, I will give the *prasāda* to my brother."

Just then, Śrī Rādhikā, who awards happiness to the devotees, arrived there in the form of a young girl, bringing with Her all the necessary ingredients for cooking sweet rice. Śrī Rūpa quickly cooked sweet rice and offered it to the Lord. He then gave the Lord's remnants to Śrī Sanātana, the partaking of which made him become intoxicated with love of God.

Śrī Sanātana asked, "How did you make this sweet rice? It has an extraordinary

taste."

In response, Śrī Rūpa narrated the whole story. After hearing everything, Śrī Sanātana chastised his brother, saying that material desires had crept back into his consciousness and so he had better firmly stick to the path of renunciation and detachment. As Śrī Sanātana was speaking, tears of love flowed from both brothers' eyes.

Once, as Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī was glorifying the beauty and qualities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in an assembly of Vaiṣṇavas, the devotees became so overwhelmed with love for the Lord that they almost lost consciousness. Still, Śrī Rūpa was a sober person who had no concern for his body due to absorption in ecstatic love of God and so he simply continued glorifying Their Lordships. Indeed, he displayed a most wonderful and highly elevated state of love of God which was inaccessible even for the most learned knowers of devotional mellows.

At that time, Śrī Karṇapura Gosvāmī approached Śrī Rūpa from the behind and observed him very closely. At first he saw that Śrī Rūpa was completely normal and in good health, but then, upon coming closer, when Śrī Rūpa's breath touched his body, he felt it to be like fire, and indeed, it left a blister on his body. Who can understand such manifestations of ecstatic love for the Lord?

One night, the Lord Śrī Govindadeva appeared to Śrī Rūpa in a dream, revealing His true identity. The Lord said, "I am buried under the earth at Gomātīla. Every

morning and evening, a cow comes and performs My *abhiṣeka* with her milk and thus nourishes Me. Go there quickly and you will understand everything.”

Accepting the Lord’s order, Śrī Rūpa discovered the Deity of Śrī Govindadeva, who is supremely enchanting. Indeed, nothing can be compared with His exquisite, transcendental beauty. As soon as one sees the Deity of Lord Govinda, his mind becomes filled with astonishment. Please have faith in these words.

How far can I describe the glories of Śrī Rūpa and the beauty of Śrī Govindadeva? The *rasika* devotees meditate on Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda and His principal worshiper, Śrī Rūpa.

Once, as Śrī Sanātana was residing at Pāvana-sarovara near Nandagrāma, he became so fully absorbed in his *bhajana* that for three days he did not go to the village for begging alms, nor did anyone come to Pāvana-sarovara. On the fourth day, a blackish young boy came to him with some milk for him to drink. Seeing the beauty of the young boy, Śrī Sanātana’s mind became captivated. He asked, “Where do you live?”

The boy replied, “I live in Vraja. We are four brothers—Śrī Harideva in Govardhana, Śrī Baladeva in this village, Śrī Keśavadeva in Mathurā, and Śrī Govindadeva in Vṛndāvana. Our father’s name is Śrī Nanda.”

After the boy had left, Śrī Sanātana’s mind became very afflicted by feelings of separation and an intense desire for the boy’s return. Finally, he went to Nandagram

and inquired at each and every house about the boy but no one could say anything about Lord Hari in the guise of a young boy. Śrī Sanātana looked everywhere but could not find the boy and so his eyes became filled with tears.

Śrī Sanātana thought, “If that boy ever comes again, I will not let Him go.” He especially was struck by the red turban on the boy’s head. Indeed, he simply thought about that turban throughout the entire day and night.

In his book, *Cātu-puṣpāñjali*, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī has compared Śrī Rādhā’s braided hair to a snake. When Śrī Sanātana read this, he did not like the comparison, considering that Śrī Rūpa had become diverted from the path of *bhava-bhakti* by unnecessarily indulging in poetic expression.

One day, as Śrī Sanātana was sitting on the shore of Rādhā-kuṇḍa performing his *bhajana*, he happened to see a swing hanging from the branch of a tree, and on that swing sat a young and blissful fair-complexioned girl. Her companions were engaged in swinging Her. He also saw a hooded snake behind the young girl, swaying from side to side. Śrī Sanātana quickly ran towards the young girl to protect Her from the snake, but when he came close, he saw that it was not a snake at all, but Her braided hair. Just then, the scene of the girl on a swing suddenly disappeared from his vision. He could clearly understand that this had been none other than the young Śrī Rādhikā enjoying a swing festival with Her friends, and that She had enacted this

pastime to remove my doubt.

Having seen Śrī Rādhā's braided hair and understanding that the description of Śrī Rūpa was correct, Śrī Sanātana was astonished and offered respect to his younger brother. Indeed, Śrī Sanātana went to his brother, Śrī Rūpa, and circumambulated him.

When Śrī Rūpa saw Śrī Sanātana circumambulating him, he became fearful and grabbed hold of his feet. Śrī Sanātana picked up Śrī Rūpa and embraced him with love and affection. In this way, both brothers constantly remained absorbed in the mellows of ecstatic love. Their characteristics are indescribable. Their fame has spread throughout the entire world. One should meditate upon their activities and characteristics.

❁ Additional Commentary ❁

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī appeared in this world in the year 1550 Samvat Era, and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī appeared in the year 1545 Samvat Era. Their younger brother was Śrī Anupama. Their father was Śrī Kumāradeva, and their mother was Revatī-devī. Both Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana were highly learned scholars.

One day, Hussain Shah was told that according to his horoscope, he would one day become a ruler of men. Thereafter, when Hussain Shah became the King of Gauḍadeśa, he employed Śrī Sanātana as his prime minister, naming him Dabīr Khās, and Śrī Rūpa as his finance minister, naming him Sākara Mallik.

Once, the two brothers spent the whole night working on their accounts because there were mistakes so that the amounts shown were not in order. While fully absorbed in their work, they became thirsty and so asked a servant to bring them a sweet drink. However, by mistake, the servant mixed white flour instead of sugar into the drink and then gave it to his masters. The next morning, the servant realized his mistake and so went and begged to be forgiven.

The two brothers thought nothing of this because they had become disgusted at how they had lost all intelligence because of their absorption in materialistic affairs. They could understand that such a life was not for their real self-interest because it would never lead them toward spiritual elevation. They thought, "Just for the love of money we stayed up the whole night and did not even once chant the holy name of the Lord."

Realizing the temporary nature of the material existence, they decided to leave their service to the king. At that time, Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu's *saṅkīrtana* movement was spreading throughout Gauḍadeśa. One night, the brothers changed their dress and approached Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. While giving them many valuable instructions, the Lord said, "You are both My eternal associates and will soon receive Lord Kṛṣṇa's mercy."

While returning home after meeting the Lord, they overheard a washerman saying to his wife, "They may very well be royal

ministers or dogs; there is no difference.” Upon hearing this, the two brothers felt both embarrassed and disgusted. Thereafter, Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Anupam distributed all their wealth and property to the devotees, *brāhmaṇas*, and family members, and set out for Śrī Vṛndāvana.

Seeing this neglect of royal duties, the king arrested Śrī Sanātana and put him in jail. On the way to Vṛndāvana, Śrī Rūpa had the *darśana* of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu at Prayāga.

Śrī Rūpa’s original name was Santoṣa. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu instructed him in the science of devotional service and then ordered Śrī Rūpa to go to Vṛndāvana via Nilācala and Kāśī. On the way, Śrī Anupam left this world. In Vṛndāvana, Śrī Rūpa manifested the Deity of Śrī Govindadeva. On the inspiration of Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, the King of Jaipur, Mān Singh, constructed a seven-story temple with red stone for Śrī Govindadeva. Later on, the temple became the target of a Yavana king’s envy so that the top three stories were destroyed. At present, Śrī Govindadeva is in Jaipur.

Śrī Rūpa compiled many wonderful literatures, including *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, *Lalita-Mādhava*, *Vidagdha-Mādhava*, *Mathurā-mahātmya*, *Dāna-keli-kaumudī*, *Padyāvalī*, *Haṁsadūta*, *Uddhava-sandeśa*, *Aṣṭādaśa-līlā-cchanda*, *Stavamālā*, and *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta*.

Once, as Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī was visualizing a pastime of the Lord within his mind, he saw that Śrī Rādhā wanted to pick flowers

from the branch of a tree but could not reach them. Śrī Kṛṣṇa suddenly came there and so Śrī Rādhā asked Him to pull the branch down so that she could pick the flowers. Kṛṣṇa pulled the branch down and Rādhā began picking flowers. Then suddenly, Kṛṣṇa let go of the branch so that Śrī Rādhā was left hanging from the branch. Seeing this wonderful pastime, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī laughed.

Just then a devotee with an injured leg was passing by, limping, when he saw Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī laughing, he thought he was laughing at him because of his infirmity. As a result of this misunderstanding, the pastime of Kṛṣṇa vanished from Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī’s mind.

Later on, Śrī Rūpa told about this incident to his brother, Śrī Sanātana, who then said, “It may be that you have knowingly or unknowingly committed an offense at the feet of a Vaiṣṇava. Therefore you should invite and feed all of the devotees and beg forgiveness from them.”

After all the devotees had assembled, the lame man said to Śrī Rūpa, “You committed an offense by making fun of me.”

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī explained to him the reason for his laughing so that the misunderstanding was cleared. From this incident we can understand the seriousness of *vaiṣṇava-aparāda*.

One time Emperor Akbar offered to build a cottage for Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī after seeing him staying in the groves. But in response, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī showed him

the transcendental abode of Vṛṇḍāvana and the palaces situated there by means of his divine vision. After seeing all this Akbar concluded that it was not at all suitable for him to arrange an ordinary cottage for Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī then said, “Kindly make arrangement so that no one cuts down the trees and creepers and kills animals and birds in Vraja.”

After Śrī Rūpa and Anupama left for Vṛṇḍāvana, Śrī Sanātana’s mind became restless. Although he was in prison, he managed to bribe the superintendent and escape so he could travel to Vṛṇḍāvana. On the way, he met his brother-in-law, Śrīkānta, at Hazipura. Since it was winter, Śrīkānta gave him a nice blanket made in Bhūtān.

Thereafter, when Śrī Sanātana arrived at Kāśī, he came to know that Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu was staying at the house of Śrī Candraśekhara, and so he went to meet Him. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Supersoul of everyone, recognized Śrī Sanātana and affectionately embraced him. Śrī Sanātana took his bath in the Gaṅgā, and instead of keeping the opulent cloth given by Śrīkānta, he took an old cloth which was somebody’s remnants. He then went to Śrī Tapan Miśra’s house and had *prasāda*.

Because Śrī Sanātana gave his expensive blanket to a Vaiṣṇava and adopted the profession of a begger, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was very happy with him. He taught him to always chant the holy names of the Lord, exhibit compassion to all living entities, and serve the devotees, saying that

these were the highest forms of religion.

Thereafter, by the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Sanātana went to Vṛṇḍāvana, but was unable to meet Śrī Rūpa there. Śrī Sanātana then started for Nilācala, but on the way, because of drinking polluted water, his entire body became covered with sores that oozed blood and pus.

At Nilācala, Śrī Sanātana went to the *bhajana-kutira* of Śrī Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Considering himself unfit because of the condition of his body, Śrī Sanātana decided to give up his life under the wheels of Lord Jagannātha’s chariot. However, being the indwelling Supersoul, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu knew everything and said, “To commit suicide is a grave offense. Achievement of the Lord’s lotus feet is possible only by worshiping Him. You have surrendered your body to Me and so you have no right to use it as you like.”

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu mercifully restored Śrī Sanātana’s body while embracing him. Thereafter, Śrī Sanātana went to Vṛṇḍāvana, where he met Śrī Rūpa. He excavated the forgotten holy places of Vraja and compiled many literatures. Among them, Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, *Bṛhad-vaiṣṇava toṣaṇī*, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava are prominent.

One day, Lord Madana-mohana ordered Śrī Sanātana in a dream, saying, “I am staying at the house of Śrī Paraśurāma Caubey at Mathurā. Go there and bring Me here.”

When Śrī Sanātana went to that person’s house for begging alms, he was astonished to

see the Madana-mohana Deity. The elderly lady at the house said, “O Bābā, what are you staring at? Since this Deity has come to my house, He has spoiled everything.”

Śrī Sanātana said, “Then give the Deity to me. He has also spoiled my life, for now I have only my loin cloth remaining. What can He spoil further?”

In this way, Śrī Sanātana took the Deity of Śrī Madana-mohana and kept Him at Āditya-tilā in Vṛṇḍāvana. Previously, he begging alms from door to door simply for his maintenance, but now he began begging for wheat flour so that he could prepare thick chapattis for offering to his Lord.

One day, Śrī Madana-mohana said to Śrī Sanātana, “Why don’t you also beg for a little salt? Without salt, these dry chapattis do not taste good at all.”

Śrī Sanātana replied, “Today you ask for salt and tomorrow You will ask for ghee. Do you want to spoil my renunciation? If you wish to enjoy palatable dishes then make Your own arrangement.”

Just then a loaded boat belonging to a businessman, Śrī Rāmadāsa Kapoor, from Multan, got stuck near Āditya-tilā in the River Yamunā. The Lord in the form of a boy shouted from the tilā, “If you want your boat to move then you should take help from Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī.”

The owner of the boat did as he was told, and when the boat again safely moved, Kapoor gratefully approached Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī. Śrī Sanātana-jī could understand that this was the pastime of his Deity. Then,

by the inspiration of Śrī Madana-mohana, Śrī Rāmadāsa Kapoor built a temple for the Deity and also made arrangements for His service. Śrī Sanātana entrusted the responsibility for maintaining the temple service to his disciple, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Brahmācārī, so that he could continue his *bhajana* without any hindrance. At present, Śrī Madana-mohana is in Karauli, Rajasthan.

Śrī Sanātana circumambulated Govardhana Hill every day. In his old age, the Lord gave him a *govardhana-śilā* with His lotus feet imprinted on it and said, “Simply circumambulate this stone and you will achieve the result of circumambulating the entire Govardhana Hill.”

This sanctified śilā can be seen even today at Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṛṇḍāvana. Śrī Sanātana would go every day from Dvādaśa Āditya-tilā to Gopīśvara Mahādeva for *darśana*. Due to his old age, Mahādeva appeared at his *bhajana kūtira* as Gopīśvara Mahādeva at a place known as Vana Khaṇḍī. Therefore, at present, this Mahādeva is known as Vana Khāṇḍī Mahādeva.

Once, a poor *brāhmaṇa* from the district of Burdwan in West Bengal worshiped Lord Śiva to get wealth. Śaṅkara instructed him to go to Vṛṇḍāvana and meet Śrī Sanātana, for he had a touchstone that turned iron into gold. The *brāhmaṇa* went to Vṛṇḍāvana and met Śrī Sanātana and begged for the touchstone. Śrī Sanātana said, “The touchstone is lying at such and such place on the shore of the Yamunā and so you can go and find it. If I

touch it, I will have to take a bath.”

When the *brāhmaṇa* searched by the shore of the Yamunā, he found the touchstone. Then he went and inquired from Śrī Sanātana about the reason for its being untouchable. Śrī Sanātana replied, “I have a superior touchstone, and if you wish to have it then you must throw this inferior touchstone into the Yamunā.”

When the *brāhmaṇa* threw the touchstone into the Yamunā, Śrī Sanātana initiated him into the chanting of a Kṛṣṇa mantra that made his life successful.

In the early morning of the full moon day in the month of Āṣāḍha in the year 1615 Samvat Era, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī left this world and entered Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s eternal pastimes. In the eternal pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, his name is Śrī Lavaṅga-mañjarī. His complexion is golden and he is dressed in garments having glittering stars. His principal service is to prepare beautiful flower garlands and offer them to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. His grove is situated on the western side of the throne at Yogapīṭha.

After Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī’s disappearance, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī felt extremely distressed and so did not come out of his *bhājana kutir*. Finally, on the twelfth day of the waxing moon in the month of Śrāvana in the year 1621 Samvat Era, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī entered the Lord’s eternal pastimes near Śṛṅgāra Vaṭa on the shore of the Kālindī.

In the eternal pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī is Śrī Rūpa-mañjarī. His

complexion is the color of cow’s urine. He wears a dress resembling peacock feathers. He is the foremost of all the *mañjarīs*. His principal service is to offer betel nuts to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. His grove is situated to the north of the throne at Yogapīṭha.

❀ Text 90 ❀

❀ Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa Gosvāmī ❀

Only an experienced devotee can understand the method of *bhājana* performed by Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa throughout his life. In his devotional practice, he gave preference to Śrī Rādhā. He worshiped the lotus feet of Śrī Rādhā within his heart with great determination. Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa served Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as a *sakhī* in the groves of Vṛndāvana. He had the utmost faith and devotion for the Lord’s *mahā-prasāda*. Indeed, his undeviating devotion qualified him for honoring the Lord’s remnants. He maintained an unorthodox vow for serving Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, for he was not concerned with following the prescribed rules and regulations mentioned in the revealed scriptures for those performing *vaidhi-bhakti*. Those who follow the path introduced by Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa, the son of Śrī Vyāsa Miśra, can understand the true merit of his teachings.

❀ Commentary ❀

Only one out of hundreds of thousands of people can possibly understand the mode of worship practiced by Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa. Śrī Rādhikā was his only goal of life and so he would first meditate on Her and then meditate on Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Worshiping the Lord in the mood of conjugal love is impossible for those who are still tinged by material desires. Therefore, not everyone is capable of worshiping the Lord in a conjugal relationship.

It is only by the mercy of Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa that one may approach such a mood of conjugal service. He unhesitatingly gave up all scriptural rules and regulations for the sake of that loving service. Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa eternally reside within his heart and so he constantly sang of Their pastimes in the groves of Vṛndāvana.

According to Śrī Priyādāsa, Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa's character was unique, and his lifestyle was very pleasing to all who knew him. All the leading devotees knew his personality perfectly well because his fame spread throughout the land. To what extent can I describe his exalted character?

When Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa developed strong attachment for Their Lordships, he left home and proceeded towards Vṛndāvana. On the way, there was the village of Catathavala where a fortunate *brāhmaṇa* named Ātmadeva resided. Trust my words that Lord Rādhā-vallabha ordered the *brāhmaṇa* to give his two daughters, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsī and Śrī Manoharī, to Śrī Hita

Harivaṁsa in marriage.

The Lord had said to the *brāhmaṇa*, "If anyone doubts that what you have done is proper then mention My name and surely they will accept this arrangement as divinely inspired. The children born of your daughters will continue your family line and become famous throughout the world. Trust these words of Mine. My service will be expanded by your daughter's children, and I will deliver many fallen souls through them."

After hearing these words of his beloved Lord and considering himself to be an obedient servant of the Lord, the *brāhmaṇa* felt very pleased. He announced this order of the Lord to everyone, and they also became very pleased. Who can describe the mercy of the Lord and the happiness that the fortunate *brāhmaṇa* experienced? All of you can just imagine to the best of your ability.

The Supreme Lord, Śrī Rādhā-vallabha, had ordered Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa to preach by revealing the amorous pastimes of their Lordships in the groves of Vṛndāvana. Taking this order on his head, Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa compiled many literatures while always drinking the nectar of the beauty of their Lordships. He was especially inclined to the worship of Śrī Rādhikā and as such, he gave great pleasure to those devotees who followed in his footsteps.

Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa was always absorbed in singing the glories of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's conjugal pastimes. While relishing the sweetness of those mellows of love,

he was eager to glorify the Lord more and more. His ultimate goal of life was to attain Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. His transcendental qualities were incomparable and so who can adequately describe them? Simply by remembering his qualities and personality, one's mind becomes filled with transcendental happiness so that the pleasure derived from sense gratification appears most insignificant.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa is said to be an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's flute. His father was Śrī Vyāsa Miśra, and his mother was Tārārāṇī-devī. Although his parents were well-to-do, they had no children. Śrī Vyāsa Miśra prayed to his elder brother, Śrī Nṛsiṁhāśrama, who had previously taken *sannyāsa*, to bless him so that he could have a son. On the order of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Nṛsiṁhāśrama blessed Śrī Vyāsa Miśra, saying, "The Lord's flute will soon appear in your family as a great personality."

After hearing this, Śrī Vyāsa Miśra and his wife departed for Vraja. Five kilometers from Mathurā is a village called Bāda, and this is where Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa was born in the early morning of Monday the eleventh day in the waxing moon in the month of Vaiśākha in the year 1530 Samvat Era. His ancestors resided in the village of Devavanda in the district of Saharanapura in Uttar Pradesh.

After staying at Bāda for some time, Śrī

Vyāsa Miśra went to the village of Devavanda and remained there with his wife and son. The young boy had a natural affection and love for the holy name of Śrī Rādhā.

Once, Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa dressed a fair-complexioned boy as Śrī Kṛṣṇa and a blackish boy as Śrī Rādhā and took them in a procession. At that time, Śrī Vyāsa Miśra saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Rādhā as Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Another time, Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa offered fruit to two trees, one black and one golden, considering them to be Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Meanwhile, in the temple, his father saw a plate of fruit even though he had only offered laddus to their Lordships.

It was Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa's practice to sip *caraṇāmṛta* before accepting his meals. One day, in order to test him, his mother, Tārārāṇī, gave him some imitation *caraṇāmṛta*, but he refused it, saying that it was not really *caraṇāmṛta*. He then forced his father to accompany him to the temple. Upon their arrival, the temple door automatically opened. Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa had the *darśana* of the Lord and was offered *caraṇāmṛta*.

On a full moon day in the month of Bhādra, Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa's father asked him to sit by the Deities while he went outside on an errand. At that time, Lord Kṛṣṇa gave Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa His pearl necklace and Śrī Rādhā gave him her shawl. When this was disclosed to him, his father could understand the extent of the Lord's mercy upon his son.

Once, during a swing festival, his father asked Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa to slowly pull the

swing of Their Lordships while he went out on an errand. Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa wanted to forcefully pull the swing and so the Lord took off His flute, flower garland, crown, with peacock feather and gave them to him. Then, when Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa's father returned, the swing automatically became slow. Thereafter, this mystery was disclosed when Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa's father saw the perspiration on the Lord's face.

Once, Śrī Rādhā appeared to Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa in a dream and said, "There is a Deity of Śrī Raṅgilāl lying in a dry well next to your house. Go and rescue the Deity and arrange for His worship and service."

The next morning, Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa climbed into the well and found the Deity. As soon as the Deity was safely removed, the well miraculously became filled with water. This Deity was named Śrī Navaraṅgilāl. At present He is situated at Devavan.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī personally gave initiation *mantras* to Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa. His sacred thread ceremony was performed with he was eight years old. Soon after that, he studied all the scriptures. At the age of sixteen, he was married to Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī, from whom he begot three sons named Śrī Vanacandra, Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra and Śrī Gopinātha; and a daughter named Shāhivade. By the inspiration of Śrī Rādhā, he left home and went to Vṛndāvana at the age of thirty-two. In Vṛndāvana he made his residence at Madana Ter. He composed prayers to the River Yamunā named Yamunāṣṭaka. The Vrajavāsīs presented

him some land beginning from Madana Ter and going up to Cīraghāṭa.

Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa manifested the following four places of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vṛndāvana—Mānasarovara, Sevākuṅja, Rāsa-maṇḍala, and Vaṁsīvaṭa. The first manifestation festival of Śrī Rādhā-vallabha took place at Sevākuṅja. The first of the two girls he had married at the village of Catathāvala village, Śrīmatī Kṛṣṇa dāsī, was engaged in the service of decorating the Lord with flowers, and the second wife, Śrīmatī Manoharī, was given the responsibility of serving the devotees.

Śrī Hita Harivaṁsa was always absorbed in meditating on the pastimes of Their Lordships. He left this world and entered the eternal pastimes of the Lord on the full moon day of the waxing moon in the month of Aśvina in the year 1608 Samvat Era.

❀ Text 91 ❀

❀ Śrī Svāmī Haridāsa ❀

Śrī Svāmī Haridāsa spread the sublime fame of Śrī Āśudhira. He was known in the society of devotees as a *rasika-bhakta*. He had great love for chanting the holy names of Śrī Śrī Śyāmā and Śyāma, who eternally enjoys pastime in the groves of Vṛndāvana. He was absorbed in relishing the conjugal pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. He was a devotee qualified to serve Their Lordships

in the mood of a *sakhī*, and he was so expert in the art of music that even the Gandharvas felt ashamed in his presence. By his sublime and melodious singing, he would satisfy Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. He offered excellent foodstuffs to Their Lordships and distributed Their remnants to the peacocks, monkeys, and fish. Many powerful kings would stand and wait at his doorstep for his *darśana*.

❀ **Commentary** ❀

Śrī Svāmī Haridāsa was like an ocean of the mellows of *mādhurya-rasa*. Who can describe his position as a *rasika* devotee of the Lord? He would constantly chant the holy names of the divine young couple, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and meditate on Their pastimes so that he Śrī Rādhā personally recognized him as a *rasika* devotee.

Once, a devotee donated to him a bottle of perfume. The donor was very fond of that perfume and so he offered it for the service of the Supreme Lord but Śrī Svāmī Haridāsa took it and threw it in the Yamunā. Śrī Svāmī Haridāsa understood the intension of that devotee and so told one of his servants to take him to the temple and have the *darśana* of Śrī Bānki Bihārī. The servant took that devotee to Nidhuvana, and as soon as the curtain was opened for awarding the *darśana* of Śrī Bihārī, everyone saw that the Lord was decorated with the perfume so that the entire temple was permeated with its fragrance. Indeed, the entire grove was made fragrant by that perfume.

Once, a pious person who possessed a

touchstone requested Śrī Svāmī Haridāsa to give him initiation. Śrī Svāmī Haridāsa first asked the man to throw the touchstone in the Yamunā. Then, when he threw it in the Yamunā, Śrī Svāmī Haridāsa gave him initiation. In this way, there are so many wonderful pastimes of Śrī Svāmī Haridāsa that are glorified in the assembly of devotees.

❀ **Text 92** ❀

❀ **Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa** ❀

Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa accepted both the divine young couple and the devotees as his worshipable Lords. He greatly praised the decoration of *tilaka* and *tulasī kañṭhī-māla*. Some devotees worshiped Śrī Matsyāvatāra, Śrī Kūrmāvatāra, Śrī Nṛsimhāvatāra, Śrī Varāhāvatāra, Śrī Vāmanāvatāra, Śrī Paraśurāma, Śrī Rāmacandra, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and other incarnations. There were others who were firmly fixed in cultivating the nine types of devotional service. Śrī Sumokhana Sukla's son, Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa, accepted service to all the Vaiṣṇavas as his goal of life. Once, during a *rāsa-līla* performance, Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa sacrificed everything for the service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. He even tore his sacred thread so that he could sew the anklets for Śrī Rādhārānī.

❀ Commentary ❀

From the beginning of Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa's spiritual journey, he had great attraction for Śrī Vṛṇḍāvana dhāma. When that attraction became too intense, he left home and went to Vṛṇḍāvana. He was so attached to the holy dhāma that he became very unhappy whenever he had to go elsewhere.

Once, Madhukara Shah, the King of Orchā, came to take him to his country. However, Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa was so attached to the service of Their Lordships that he refused to go with the king. His mind and intelligent were continually absorbed in the service of the Supreme Lord and the devotees.

Once, as Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa was dressing and decorating the Deities, he placed a crown on the Lord's head. However, because of its smooth surface, the crown kept falling off, again and again. When he tried to tie the crown and still could not succeed, he said, "O Lord, either allow me to put the crown on Your head or, if You do not like my service then just dress Yourself the way You want."

After saying this, Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa left the Deity room and began performing *kīrtana* in a grove. Thereafter, the Deity personally put on the crown. Someone came and said to Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa, "Today you have put on the Lord's crown in a very beautiful manner."

Hearing this, Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa remembered his beloved Lord and quickly

went inside the temple, where he saw that the Lord looked very beautiful with His crown. Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa then smilingly said, "Alas! Because You have decorated Yourself so nicely with this crown, You naturally are dissatisfied with how I dress and decorate You."

Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa would sit with the devotees to honor *prasāda* just to give them happiness. Once, as he was sitting with other devotees to take *prasāda*, his wife, who was very expert in every respect, was serving. While serving milk to the devotees, she poured the cream of the milk into her husband's bowl by mistake. Because of this, Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa became very upset with her. He thought, "My wife thinks of me as her husband and so she is trying to nourish me above the others."

From that day onwards Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa stopped his wife from serving him. Because of this, she became very unhappy, so much so that she stopped eating and drinking. She did not eat anything for three days and thus her body became very weak. All the devotees then pacified Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa so that finally he agreed to give her the punishment that if she wanted to resume serving him then she would have to sell all her ornaments and use the money for serving saintly personalities. His wife agreed and thus regained her service.

When Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa's daughter, Ratnābāi, was married, his wife and sons arranged everything with great enthusiasm. There were varieties of foodstuffs cooked

for the members of the groom's family. When Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa saw the nice foodstuffs, he remembered the devotees and thought that these delicious preparations were actually meant to be enjoyed by saintly personalities. He thus started considering how to feed all these nice preparations to the Vaiṣṇavas.

Thereafter, in his mind, Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa offered all the foodstuff to the Lord and then secretly invited many devotees by sending one of his servants to call them. When the devotees arrived, he gave each one a bag of food and told them to go to their respective *kuṭīras* and eat.

Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa induced his Deity to play His flute. He converted a *brāhmaṇa* into a devotee and firmly fixed him in devotional service. Once, when a devotee came to meet him in Vṛṇḍāvana, Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa said to him "Your Lord does not wish to leave Vṛṇḍāvana."

The devotee had to leave Vṛṇḍāvana and Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa kept his śālagrāmāśilā and secretly put a bird in his Deity's box. When that devotee went far away and opened the box to worship his Deity, the bird flew back to Vṛṇḍāvana. Thus the devotee understood that Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa was correct in saying that the Lord was not willing to leave Vṛṇḍāvana.

Once, on the full moon night Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa-līlā* pastimes was being enacted. Who can describe the joy everybody felt while seeing this drama? In the course of the performance, when Śrī Rādhā began

dancing in a most unique fashion at the *rāsa-maṇḍala*, it appeared as if lightening flashed in everyone's eyes. Suddenly, Śrī Rādhā's anklets broke so that the bells scattered all over the floor. Seeing this, all the devotees became anxious.

Without hesitation, Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa tore apart his sacred thread, repaired the ankle bells, and placed the anklet on Śrī Rādhā as before. This brave act of Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa astonished the assembled devotees. Śrī Harirāma Vyāsa then said, "I have meditated like this throughout my entire life and today my hard labor has yielded a sublime result."

❀ Text 93 ❀

❀ Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī ❀

In order to sustain the mood of devotional service established by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī became like a reservoir of conclusive truths. To perform *bhajana* with firm determination and according to the prescribed rules is the shore of that reservoir. There was not even a tinge of the dirt of material contamination in the water of that reservoir.

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī resided in Vṛṇḍāvana for the remainder of his life, having intense attachment for the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. He was the foremost of erudite scholars who compiled many

transcendental literatures. He presented the true understanding of the conclusive truths derived from all the scriptures. He studied all the scriptures to take from them their essential teachings. He was most expert in removing all the doubts of inquisitive persons and refuting the arguments of opposing elements. He worshiped the Lord while relishing the highest transcendental mellows. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī was a sober, peaceful, self-controlled, and supremely intelligent personality.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī compiled many books that are capable of slackening the knots of false ego within the hearts of the conditioned souls. He was offered unlimited wealth from all classes of people, but he threw everything in the Yamunā. Some of his disciples and servants requested him not to throw the wealth into the Yamunā, but instead use it properly by engaging it in the service of the devotees.

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī said with conviction, “I do not find the qualifications, either in my disciples or my servants, which are necessary for rendering service to saintly persons.”

A disciple then said, “I wish to serve the devotees with love and devotion. After all, it requires practice to attain perfection.”

Once, a devotee arrived at night and was hungry. The disciple became disturbed and angrily said to the guest, “If you are so hungry then eat me.”

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī preached to his disciple,

describing the glories of saintly persons. Thereafter, he instructed all of his disciples and servants that first of all, one must practice speaking sweetly to everyone, from early morning until late at night. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī’s characteristics are impossible for an ordinary man to describe. There was no limit to his ability to perform devotional service. He was the pinnacle of renunciation. Who can adequately describe his glories and renunciation?

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī was the son of Anupama (Vallabha), the younger brother of Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana. Śrī Anupama was a staunch devotee of Lord Rāmacandra. From his very birth, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī had unwavering attachment for the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma. When Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana met Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu at Rāmakeli, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī also secretly had the *darśana* of the Lord. As his intense eagerness to meet Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu increased day by day, he left home and went to Navadvīpa on the pretext of study. Within a short time he mastered all the scriptures. Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu bestowed mercy upon him and ordered him to go and reside in Vṛndāvana.

On the way to Vṛndāvana, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī stayed at the house of Śrī Madhusūdana Vācāspati, who was a recipient of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya’s mercy in Kāśī, and who had studied logic and Vedānta under his guidance. From there, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī

went to Vṛṇḍāvana, and after accepting initiation from Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, he studied the devotional literatures, especially Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, under the guidance of Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana. Thereafter, he resided at Vṛṇḍāvana throughout the rest of his life.

Once, Emperor Akbar called a meeting of learned scholars to determine which was superior, the Gaṅgā or the Yamunā. When the scholars could not come to a conclusion, the Emperor called for Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī. However, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī explained that he never spends a night anywhere outside of Vṛṇḍāvana. Akbar then made an arrangement so that Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī could quickly return to Vṛṇḍāvana before dark. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī went to Agra riding on a chariot drawn by fast-running horses.

While describing the greatness of the Gaṅgā, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī said, “The Gaṅgā is the water that washes the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord and the Yamunā is the Lord’s queen. Therefore it should be easy for you to ascertain which is superior.”

The assembled people glorified him and Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī returned to Vṛṇḍāvana. Once, a learned scholar who was conquering the four directions came to Vṛṇḍāvana and challenged Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī to debate with him about scriptural conclusions. It is the etiquette that a devotee refrains from debates and arguments. In consideration of this, Śrī Rūpa voluntarily accepted defeat and gave the scholar a certificate in writing. Thereafter, the scholar declared all over Vṛṇḍāvana that he had defeated Śrī Rūpa

Gosvāmī.

When he heard about the defeat of his spiritual master, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī challenged and defeated that scholar. When Śrī Rūpa heard this, he chastised Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, saying, “You have conquered that *brāhmaṇa*, but you have failed to understand that a devotee should be humbler than a blade of grass. Therefore, from today onwards, I reject your association.”

Without speaking, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī went to the shore of Yamunā at Nanda-ghāṭa and began residing there in a small cave. He sustained his life simply by accepting whatever little he could get by the will of the Lord. Sometimes he would mix water with wheat flour and drink it. As a result, he got a severe case of diarrhea.

One day, Śrī Sanātana went to that area to beg alms from the house of a Vrajavāsī. When the Vrajavāsī did not answer, he again knocked on the door. A lady of the house then said, “Our *bābā* is better than you because he is satisfied to drink only wheat flour mixed with water.”

When Śrī Sanātana went and saw that *bābā*, he recognized that it was his own Jīva. After hearing the entire story from him, Śrī Sanātana called for Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī and requested him to be merciful to Jīva. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī then went and embraced Śrī Jīva and also cured his diarrhea.

Once, someone asked Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī whether the material world is factual or an illusion. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī replied, “I accept the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the only supreme

truth. I have nothing to do with, nor does my intelligence ponder over, external subject matters like whether the material world is factual or an illusion.”

Having received this brief and conclusive answer, that person's doubt was cleared. After the disappearance of Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī became the ācārya of Śrī Mādhva-gauḍīya -sampradāya. In the eternal pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī is Vilāsa-mañjarī. His complexion is the color of a golden *ketaki* flower. He dresses in red garments, and his service is to decorate the foreheads of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and apply black ointment to Their eyes. His grove is situated in the southwest corner of the Yogapīṭha.

❀ Text 94 ❀

These exalted personalities relished the sweetness of Śrī Vṛṇḍāvana-dhāma to their full satisfaction. They are Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, whose worshipable Lord was Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa; Śrī Hṛṣīkeṣa, Śrī Alī Bhagavāna, Śrī Viṭṭhala Vipula, who was like an ocean of transcendental mellows; Śrī Jagannātha Thāneśvarī, Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī; the great sage, Śrī Madhu Gosvāmī; Śrī Raṅga, Brahmācārī Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa, and Paṇḍita Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa, both of whom were qualified recipients of loving devotional service to Lord Harī and very dear to the Lord. Śrī Uddhava Ghamaṇḍa Devācārya, Śrī Bhugarbha Gosvāmī, and Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī

were also exalted devotees of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. All these devotees took a vow to reside in Vṛṇḍāvana.

❀ Commentary ❀

❀ Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa ❀

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who eternally resides in the devotion-filled heart of Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, manifested to him as Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa. Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa served his supremely worshipable Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Ramanalāla with love and devotion by offering Him nice foodstuffs and other paraphernalia. He became reknowned throughout the world by the influence of his devotional service. He resided in Vṛṇḍāvana and relished the unfathomable sweetness of the holy *dhāma* throughout his entire life. Whoever came in contact with him and received his mercy received a new life that was filled with joy. He was inclined to see the good qualities in others and ignore their faults. He was an abode of mercy, a foundation of religious principles, and the king among devotees.

❀ Additional commentary ❀

❀ Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa ❀

Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa appeared in the village of Belaguṇḍī at Śrī Raṅgam on the third day of the dark moon in the month of Māgha in the year 1557 Samvat era. His father

was Śrī Venkṭa Bhaṭṭa and his mother was Sadamvā. Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu's dear associate, Śrī Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī, was his uncle. From his uncle, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa studied logic, Vedānta, grammar, literature, and philosophy.

When Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa was eleven years old, Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu arrived at his house to spend the four months of *cāturmāsya* while traveling to the holy places in South India. In that first meeting, he fully surrendered himself at the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu instructed him and his father in the confidential understanding of Lord Kṛṣṇa's Vraja pastimes. Seeing his mood of detachment towards worldly life, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu ordered him to go to Vṛndāvana and study the devotional literature under the guidance of Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana.

After the demise of his parents, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa went to Vṛndāvana. At that time Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was staying at Jagannātha Purī. Knowing of his arrival in Vṛndāvana, the Lord sent him some *tulasī* offered to Lord Jagannātha, His *cādara*, and an *āsana* on which He had sat to meditate on the Supreme Lord. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu sent these items to Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa as *prasāda*.

After receiving this mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa became overwhelmed by feelings of love of God. Once, for arranging a grand festival for the pleasure of Śrī Rādhā-ramana, a businessman

had to taken a loan. Later on, Śrī Rādhā-ramana personally repaid that loan.

Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭajī compiled many literatures, including Śrī Harī-bhakti-vilāsa, *Sat-kriyā-sāra-dipikā*, and *Sanṣkāra-dipikā*. He also wrote commentaries on others' literatures. After spending a life engaged in devotional service, he finally entered the Lord's eternal pastimes on the fifth day of the waxing moon in the month of Āṣāḍa in the year 1507 Śaka era. In the eternal pastimes of the Lord, he is Guṇa-mañjarī. His complexion resembles lightning, and he wears red garments. His principal service is to offer a *cāmara* and water to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. His grove is situated to the south of the throne in Yogapiṭha.

❀ Śrī Alī Bhagavāna ❀

Śrī Alī Bhagavāna was a devotee of Lord Rāmacandra, serving Him with great devotion, but after he came to Vṛndāvana, he had a change of heart. When he saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rādhā enjoying *rāsa-līlā* pastimes in Vṛndāvana, accompanied by countless *gopīs*, he lost his external consciousness. He became absorbed in love of God so that his eyes became thirsty to have the *darśana* of Śrī Rāsabihārī Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, he changed the name of his worshipable Śrī Rāma to Śrī Rāsabihārī.

When his spiritual master heard of his new way of life, he came to Vṛndāvana. Śrī Alī Bhagavāna respectfully greeted his spiritual

master and offered him his obeisances. When his spiritual master inquired, “Why did you change your method of worship?” Śrī Alī Bhagavāna replied, “You are my spiritual master and Śrī Sītā-Rāma is my worshipable Lord. There is no doubt about this. And yet, because I felt such great satisfaction and joy by seeing the form of Śrī Rāsabihārī, I began serving Him.”

Seeing his disciple’s firm determination, the spiritual master became very pleased at heart and said, “There is no harm in worshiping either of Them. Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are one. Therefore, there is no mistake in worshiping Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I wish that you serve Lord Śrī Rāsabihārī nicely with love and devotion.”

❀ Śrī Viṭṭhala Vipuladeva ❀

Śrī Viṭṭhala Vipuladeva was a disciple of Śrī Svāmī Harīdāsa. After the disappearance of his spiritual master, he felt greatly pained by the feelings of separation. In order to pacify his despondency due to separation from his spiritual master, the devotees of Vṛndāvana arranged for a *rāsa-līlā* performance. In that assembly, all the great devotees of Vṛndāvana were present, and Śrī Viṭṭhala Vipuladeva was invited. While hearing the glorification of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and watching the *rāsa* dance performance, Śrī Viṭṭhala Vipuladeva completely lost external consciousness. Indeed, he gave up his mortal body and received his spiritual body for

entering the eternal pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, in which his spiritual master was participating. According to the author, Śrī Viṭṭhala Vipuladeva’s strong attachment for his spiritual master paved the way to his success of life so that he could be addressed as an ocean of transcendental mellows.

❀ Śrī Jagannātha Thāneśvarī ❀

Śrī Jagannātha Thāneśvarī was an associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Before joining Śrī Mahāprabhu, he had the *darśana* of the effulgent Lord Jagannātha in his house for three days. Considering this to be the Lord’s causeless mercy, he completely detached himself from worldly life and became a disciple of Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu. Mahāprabhu named him Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa, but out of great affection, all the devotees called him Kṛṣṇaji.

Once, Lord Śrī Mana-mohana spoke to him in a dream. The Lord said, “I am lying in such and such well and so please come and take me out and inaugurate My worship.”

Having received the Lord’s instructions, Śrī Jagannātha Thāneśvarī took the Deity of Śrī Mana-mohana out of the well and began serving Him with love and devotion.

Śrī Jagannātha Thāneśvarī had a son named Raghunātha who was illiterate. In order to educate His devotee’s son, the merciful Lord recited a verse to Śrī Jagannātha Thāneśvarī in a dream and told him that he should

teach it to his son, assuring him that by this recitation, his son would become a scholar.

Śrī Jagannātha taught the verse to his son, and as a result, the boy soon became highly educated. Just see the Lord's unparalleled mercy upon Śrī Jagannātha Thāneśvarī! In this way, there are continuously loving exchanges between the devotees and the Supreme Lord.

❀ Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī ❀

There was an associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu named Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī. His characteristics and behavior were most sublime. He was always eager to remember the ever-fresh and ever-blissful pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. His attachment for Their Lordships was spontaneous, just as a fish is naturally attached to living in the water. He was always eager to recite, sing, and hear Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which was as dear to him as his own life. He was so fond of reciting Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam that he considered anyone who was similarly attached to be his dear friend.

Once, Śrī Lokanātha saw a devotee reciting Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam as he was walking down the street and so he immediately went and fell at his lotus feet. In this way, he demonstrated his utmost love and devotion for Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and those with a similar attachment.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī was born in the village of Bālakheḍa in the district of Jessore in East Bengal in the year 1540 Samvat Era. His father was Śrī Padmanābha Cakravartī and mother was Sītā-devī. In his childhood, he studied grammar and other subjects from his father, and then studied the devotional literatures, such as Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, from Śrī Advaita Ācārya, who resided at Śāntipura. Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu also studied at the school of Śrī Advaita Ācārya and that is how Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī first met Him. Śrī Ācārya mercifully caught hold of Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī's hand and entrusted him to the care of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

After finishing his studies, and after the departure of his parents from this world, Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī met Śrī Mahāprabhu again as the Lord was preaching the cult of devotional service in the house of Śrī Advaita Ācārya. At that time, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, "Because I will soon take *sannyāsa*, you should go to Śrī Vṛndāvana."

Although in Vṛndāvana, Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī was always hankering after the association of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Lord had instructed him in a dream not to leave Vṛndāvana and go anywhere else. In Vraja, Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī began residing underneath a *tamāla* tree near Śrī Kīśorī-kuṇḍa in the village of Umrao in the sub-division of Chātā.

One day, the Lord told Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī in a dream that He is also in

Kiśori-kunḍa and so he should pray for His manifestation and then begin His service. Accordingly, Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī revealed the Deities, named Them Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda, and began serving Them very nicely.

Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī had taken a vow that he would never build a *kutīra* or make any disciples. Therefore he kept his Deities in the bushes or underneath trees.

And yet, Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī broke his vow by initiating Śrī Narottama Dāsa, the son of Kṛṣṇānanda Dutta, the King of Khetri, which is situated on the bank of the Padmā River. Later on, seeing his service attitude and devotion for his spiritual master, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī awarded Śrī Narottama Dāsa the title Ṭhākura.

Once, as he was completely absorbed in meditation on his worshipable Lord, Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī was late for cooking and so the Lord personally took his form and cooked. Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī entered the eternal pastimes of the Lord on the eighth day of the waning moon in the month of Śrāvana in the year 1645 Samvat era. In the eternal pastimes of the Lord, he is Śrī Manjulāli-maṅjarī and his complexion is the color of molten gold. He dresses in red garments. His principal service is to arrange the garments of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. His grove is situated at the northeast corner of the Yogapīṭha.

❀ Śrī Madhu Paṇḍita Gosvāmī ❀

Śrī Madhu Paṇḍita Gosvāmī came to Śrī Vṛndāvana from West Bengal after hearing discussions of the glories of the Lord. He had an intense desire to see the beautiful form of Śrī Syāmasundara, who attracts the minds of everyone within the three worlds. Indeed, he constantly thought about the inconceivable and unlimited beauty of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's transcendental form.

With this desire, Śrī Madhu Paṇḍita Gosvāmī roamed through the forests of Vṛndāvana searching for Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the groves. Ineed, while searching for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he forgot his hunger and thrust, or even whether it was day or night.

One day, as he was sitting on the shore of the Yamunā near Vaṁśivata in Vṛndāvana, the waves suddenly flooded the river's banks. As the waves forcefully engulfed him, Śrī Madhu Paṇḍita Gosvāmī saw the most beautiful Deity of Śrī Gopinātha. Śrī Madhu Paṇḍita Gosvāmī picked up the Deity and kept Him on his lap. Fortunate devotees go to have His *darśana* and thus feel great satisfaction. At present, Śrī Gopinātha is being worshiped in Jaipur.

❀ Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Brahmācārī ❀

Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Brahmācārī was a disciple of Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī. After installing Śrī Madana-mohana in His temple, Śrī Sanātana

Gosvāmī entrusted the service of the Deity to Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Brahmācārī. Thereafter, by the order of his spiritual master, Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Brahmācārī expertly served the Deity with love and devotion. Thus Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Brahmācārī became recognized as an exalted devotee of the Lord and was respected by everyone. He had a disciple named Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, who was also a very advanced devotee.

While dressing and decorating Śrī Madana-mohana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Brahmācārī completely forgot himself, being so much absorbed in his service to the Lord. Indeed, he was continually merged in an ocean of ecstatic love. His mood of offering foodstuffs to the Deity is truly indescribable. This Deity is at present being worshiped at Karaulī in Rājasthān.

❁ Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Paṇḍita ❁

Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Paṇḍita was a staunch devotee of Lord Govinda, the all-attractive embodiment of transcendental mellows. He is not to be confused with Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Brahmācārī. Attachment for serving the Lord was visible in each and every limb of his body, and his intelligent was absolutely fixed in the service of the Lord. The commentator on Śrī Bhaktamāla says that if your mind is attracted towards the service of the Lord then you should have faith in these words.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Paṇḍita had great faith in and affection for the devotees of the Lord.

He served the devotees by giving them *prasāda* and embracing them with love and affection. His attitude of serving the Supreme Lord and the devotees was unique and thus exemplary.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Paṇḍita had spontaneous love and devotion for the Supreme Lord and thus with great humility and firm faith he dealt with others. He made no distinction between service to the Supreme Lord and service to the devotees.

❁ Śrī Bhugarbha Gosvāmī ❁

Śrī Bhugarbha Gosvāmī lived in Vṛṇḍāvāna throughout his entire life. He happily sat at Govinda-kuṇja, which is situated near Śrī Govindadeva's temple. He was completely detached from worldly life and very attached to the nectarean beauty of the Lord. He associated with like-minded devotees and relished the unparalleled beauty of the Lord. His devotional practice was to always think of the Lord by offering prayers and worshiping Him within his mind. There is no doubt that the Lord manifested Himself within the mind of Śrī Bhugarbha Gosvāmī. Śrī Priyādāsa says, "I have tried to describe Śrī Bhugarbha Gosvāmī's devotional sentiments as far as my intelligence and ability allow." He was saturated with the mellows of love of God. Only exalted devotees could understand his mood and characteristics.

❀ Śrī Hṛṣikeśa Devācārya ❀

Śrī Hṛṣikeśa Devācārya was a recipient of the mercy of Śrī Harivyaśa Devācārya of the Nimbārka-sampradāya. He resided in Vṛndāvana-dhāma and was constantly absorbed in worshiping the Lord within his mind. He met Śrī Agradevācārya, the spiritual master of the author of this book, in Vṛndāvana.

❀ Śrī Raṅga ❀

Śrī Raṅga was very fond of serving saintly devotees. Once, as he arranged to feed some devotees, the number greatly increased so that the cooks became nervous because there just wasn't enough *bhoga* to feed them all. Still, Śrī Raṅga was confident that the food would be sufficient to feed all the devotees. Thereafter, he not only fed all the devotees to their full satisfaction but saw that there was some left over. Seeing this miracle, everybody began to glorify him.

❀ Śrī Ghaṇaṇḍī ❀

Śrī Ghaṇaṇḍī was a disciple of Śrī Harivyaśa Devācārya of the Nimbārka-sampradāya. He took initiation and instruction in his childhood. He was always proud of having Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as his worshipable Lords so that people called him *ghaṇaṇḍī*,

or proud. His spiritual master gave him the name Śrī Uddhavadeva. His birthplace was the village of Dūvardū near Toḍā Bhīma. In Vraja, he lived in the village of Karahalā and performed his *bhajana* there. Being pleased by his devotional service, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa awarded him Their *darśana* and also gave him a crown and ordered him to enact *rāsa-līlā* performances with the help of Vrajavāsi boys. One can see this crown even today at the village of Karahalā.

❀ Text 95 ❀

❀ Śrī Raṣika Murārī ❀

Śrī Raṣika Murārī was a very liberal devotee. He even instructed a maddened elephant to chant the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He utilized his body, mind, and wealth in serving the devotees along with his family members. He enjoined feeding the devotees sumptuous *prasāda* and worshiping them according to his means. What more can I say?

Śrī Raṣika Murārī had greater faith in and love for the devotees of Lord Hari than he had for Lord Hari. He was fully absorbed in love for Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the moon-like Supreme Personalities of Vṛndāvana.

Śrī Raṣika Murārī performed many miracles throughout his lifetime. He displayed the wonderful power of his devotional service by driving out the Yavana king from Śrī Syāmānanda's property, considering it only

fit for serving devotees.

❀ **Commentary** ❀

Śrī Raṣika Murārījī nourished the mood of serving the Vaiṣṇavas, for he served them in a grand manner. Who can describe his power of devotional service? His service attitude and methods of worship were unique. For example, he kept a pitcher filled with the water that had washed the lotus feet of Vaiṣṇavas in his house. He would offer obeisances to, worship, and meditate on that pitcher every day. He gave unlimited pleasure to the devotees who visited him.

Śrī Priyādāsa says that the happiness Śrī Raṣika Murārī derived from serving the devotees is indescribable. He arranged for festivals to worship his spiritual master in a grand way. During these festivals, he spent the entire day singing and glorifying the Lord and his spiritual master while simultaneously feeding all the devotees. This service gave him immense pleasure. Sometimes he would hold a festival that would continue for twelve days, or even more. There would be devotees continuously coming and going throughout these days so that it would be a wonderful sight to see.

One day, as many devotees were taking *prasāda*, Śrī Raṣika Murārī wanted to test his disciples and so he asked them to go and wash the feet of all those assembled there. When the disciples brought the water that had washed the devotees' feet, Śrī Raṣika Murārī drank a little and then remarked, "Why don't I experience the excellent taste

of the water that has washed the devotees' feet?"

Śrī Raṣika Murārī doubted that perhaps his disciples had neglected to wash the lotus feet of some of the devotees. With this in mind, he said to a disciple, "Tell me the truth. Did you neglect to wash any devotee's feet?"

Finally one of the disciples said, "There was a devotee who had leprosy on his feet and so I did not wash them."

At this, Śrī Raṣika Murārī said, "Go now, wash his feet, and bring me the water."

The disciple went and washed that devotee's feet. Śrī Raṣika Murārī drank the water and distributed it to others. Such was his faith and devotion in the water that washed the feet of the devotees. He felt unlimited happiness by drinking this water so that tears of love would flow from his eyes.

❀ **Additional commentary** ❀

Śrī Raṣika Murārī appeared in the village of Rohiṇinagar in Orissa. He was born on the morning of Tuesday, the first day of the waxing moon in the month of Kārttika in the year 1512 Saka Era. His father was Śrī Acyuta Paṭṭanāyaka and his mother was Bhavānī-devī. His family priest named him Rasika, and his parents lovingly called him Murārī. Therefore he was called Rasika Murārī.

During his childhood, Śrī Raṣika Murārī saw many saintly persons come to his house

and so he developed a taste for chanting the holy names of Lord Hari. Once, while listening to the *Gopī-gītā* (prayers by the *gopīs* from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam) from the mouth of Śrī Maṇḍanācārya, he fell onto the ground unconscious. He learned grammar, poetry, drama, astrology, and philosophical treatises from Śrī Bhalabhadra, Śrī Anukūla Cakravartī, and Śrī Yadunandana Ācārya. He studied Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam from Śrī Jagannāthācārya.

After hearing the Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī commentary on the Twelfth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam from Śrī Hari Dubey, who came from Vraja, and after hearing about Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana's renunciation and attachment to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Raṣika Murārī was so impressed that he left home and began traveling to the holy places throughout Orissa.

Once, when his heart became greatly anxious to receive Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu's mercy, Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared to him and ordered him to go to the village of Dharendā and take shelter of Śrī Śyāmānanda there. Meanwhile, Śrī Śyāmānanda had already heard about the devotional mood of Śrī Raṣika Murārī and so he went to the village of Rohiṇī. On the way, Śrī Śyāmānanda converted King Vikunṭhanātha of Ghaṇṭaśilā into a Vaiṣṇava while reciting Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, chanting the holy names of the Lord, and giving *prasāda* to the devotees.

Śrī Raṣika Murārī went to Ghaṇṭaśilā

to see Śrī Śyāmānanda. Accompanied by the chanting of the Lord's holy name, Śrī Śyāmānanda initiated Śrī Raṣika Murārī into the chanting of a *mantra* of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and gave him the name Śrī Rasikānanda.

In the course of his devotional life, Śrī Rasikānanda learned about the confidential truths of Vraja, the mystery of the Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, and the importance of being initiated into a bonafide *sampradāya*.

Later on, Śrī Raṣika Murārī learned *kriyā-yoga* from Śrī Dāmodara Dāsa. After traveling to all the holy places of Vraja, Śrī Raṣika Murārī returned to Orissa and preached the cult of devotional service very strongly. Once, a *yogī* whose ears were pierced by wood came to see him while sitting on the back of a lion. Seeing him like this, Śrī Raṣika Murārī, who was sitting on a wall and brushing his teeth, asked the wall, which was simply dead matter, to move about. When the *yogī* saw this miracle of converting matter into spirit, he was so impressed that he took initiation from Śrī Raṣika Murārī and became a Vaiṣṇava. Even today that place, known as Dātaun, is famous.

Once, while traveling to Nīlācala, Śrī Raṣika Murārī came to the village of Jājapura, where he had to cross the Vaitaraṇī River. However, while crossing the river, the boat capsized. Still, by the strength of his devotional prowess, he and all the other passengers were saved. Indeed, the manuscripts they were carrying, such as the *Bhagavad-gītā* and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, were not even touched by the water.

As Śrī Raṣika Murārī resided at Nilācala, he would offer a flower garland to Lord Jagannātha every day after having His *darśana*. He established a *maṭha* at Phoola Ṭoṭā in Bālīshahi. He left this world while hearing glorification of the Lord in the temple of Kṣīra-corā-gopīnātha at Remunā. He is loincloth, and other items used by him, are kept near his *samādhi* in the courtyard of this temple. It is the opinion of learned devotees that Śrī Rasikānanda was an incarnation of Lord Aniruddha.

❀ **Text 96** ❀

In order to deliver the conditioned souls who have fallen into the ocean of repeated birth and death, the following devotees of the Supreme Lord appeared in this world. They are Śrī Sojhā, Śrī Simvā, the sober Śrī Adhāra, Śrī Harinābha, Śrī Trilocana, Śrī Āśādhara, Śrī Dyaurājanīra, and Śrī Sadana. All of these great souls relieved the suffering conditioned souls from the distress of material existence. Other devotees, such as Avadhūta, Kāśīśvara, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīṅkara, Śrī Kaṭahariyā, Śrī Svabhūrāma Devācārya, Śrī Udārāma, and Śrī Duṅgara, took a vow to chant the holy name of Lord Hari. Śrī Padma, Śrī Padāratha, Śrī Rāmadāsa, and Śrī Vimalānanda showered the nectar of the devotional mellows of Lord Hari upon the poor suffering souls of this world.

❀ **Śrī Sadana** ❀

Śrī Sadana was a butcher by caste, but on the platform of devotional service, he was an honest and advanced devotee. He was never envious of any living entity although engaged in selling meat as his means of livelihood. He would buy meat from other people and then sell it in the market so that he would not have to engage in violence toward other living entities. In spite of engaging this business, his love and devotion for the Supreme Lord remained undisturbed. He had no interest in leading a materialistic life or in hearing about or talking about worldly dealings.

Śrī Sadana had a śālagrāma-śilā which he had found on the road. Without knowing the glories of that stone, Śrī Sadana used it for weighing meat. The special quality of this śilā was that it would show the weight of whatever quantity of meat the buyer would ask for.

One day, when a strict Vaiṣṇava saw Śrī Sadana weighing meat with the śālagrāma-śilā, tears flowed from his eyes. The devotee said to Śrī Sadana, “You should not use the Supreme Lord in the form of Śrī Śālagrāma to weigh meat. Rather, give the śilā to me and I will worship Him.”

Śrī Sadanaṅgi gave the devotee the śilā. The devotee then took the śālagrāma to his home and worshiped Him according to the prescribed procedures. However, the Lord did not like his worship. At night, in a dream, the Lord said to the devotee, “Return

Me to Śrī Sadana *bhakta*. I am happy there because I enjoy swinging on the scale while hearing My glorification from his mouth. I am attracted by his loving sentiments and do not mind his occupation.”

❀ Śrī Kāśīvara Gosvāmī ❀

Śrī Kāśīvara Gosvāmī was an *avadhūta saṁnyāsī*. He preferred residing in Jagannātha Purī, but later on, by the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he went to reside in Śrī Vṛṇḍāvana. Upon seeing the beauty of Śrī Vṛṇḍāvana-dhāma, all the desires in his heart became fulfilled. In Vṛṇḍāvana, he received the opportunity to serve Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govindadeva, the crest jewel of all those enjoy *rasas*. This Deity was the life and soul of all the devotees residing there. He served Śrī Govindadeva with utmost faith and devotion. Who can describe the ever-increasing loving sentiments present within his heart? Hearing of his love and devotion for the Supreme Lord, one becomes detached from worldly existence.

❀ Text 97 ❀

The Supreme Personality of Godhead planted these trees in the form of great devotees within this world. Their compassion for the fallen conditioned souls is the shadow of those trees, and their devotional service

is the fruit. Their names are Śrī Yatirāma, Śrī Rāmarāvala, Śrī Syāma, Śrī Khojī, Śrī Sihā, Śrī Dalahā, Śrī Padma, Śrī Manoratha, Śrī Rāṅkābaṅkā, and Śrī Dyaugū, who constantly chanted the holy names of the Lord. Other devotees were Śrī Jāḍā, Śrī Cācāguru, Śrī Savāi, Śrī Candā, Śrī Nāpā, Śrī Puruṣottama, Śrī Catura, and Śrī Gītā, who totally renounced his false ego. The character and intelligence of these devotees were transcendently sublime and free from faults. They did not dance to the tune of the drum of material existence.

❀ Śrī Khojī ❀

Śrī Khojī's spiritual master was always absorbed in remembering the Supreme Lord. Realizing that his end was near, and to give evidence of his liberation, he hung a bell and told all his disciples that when he would attain the shelter of the Supreme Lord, it would automatically ring. He said, “This will be the proof of my liberation.”

However, when the guru left his body, the bell did not ring. As a result, all of his disciples became despondent and anxious. Śrī Khojī was not present when his spiritual master left his body. He arrived there later on. When he came to know everything, he looked upwards from where his spiritual master had left his body and saw a ripe mango in a tree. He took the mango and cut it in half. From that mango came a small insect, and in front of everybody's eyes, the

insect disappeared. Just at that moment, the bell began to ringing. This incident is a well-known historical fact.

The commentator, Śrī Priyādāsa, says that from this incident, Śrī Khojī qualifications are understood. Still, the question remains—why did the position of the spiritual master appear inferior to that of his disciple? The answer is that according to the scriptures, the speed of the mind is faster than that of the wind. The spiritual master proved this scriptural statement.

Another consideration is that the spiritual master of Śrī Khojī had already obtained the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, even during his manifest existence. This is a well-known fact. Then at the time of giving up his body, he saw a ripe mango hanging in a tree and desired to offer it to the Supreme Lord. Because of this desire, the Supreme Lord, who is under the control of His devotees, fulfilled it. Thus the position of the spiritual master remained intact as superior, and the doubts and distresses of the disciples were vanquished.

❁ Śrī Rāṅkābāṅkā ❁

Śrī Bāṅkā was the wife of Śrī Rāṅkā. This devotee couple lived at Paṇḍarapura and had no other desire than engagement in the service of the Supreme Lord. Their methods and mood of service was unique. They collected dry wood from the forest and sold it in the market. They meditated on the

transcendental form of the Supreme Lord within their hearts.

Once, the exalted devotee, Śrī Nāmadeva, prayed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa to remove the poverty of Rāṅkā and Bāṅkā. However, the Supreme Lord said, “I have tried various means for giving them some wealth but they never accept anything. If you don’t believe Me then come with Me and I will show you how selfless they are.”

Thereafter, the Lord placed a bag of gold coins on the road while He and Śrī Nāmadeva hid in the bushes of a nearby forest. Soon, Śrī Rāṅkā and Bāṅkā came down that road. Śrī Rāṅkā was walking in the front and Śrī Bāṅkā was following him. When Śrī Rāṅkā saw the bag of gold coins lying in the street, he thought, “After all, my wife is a woman and so even though she has no material desires, she may become tempted by a worldly object that comes into view.”

Thinking like this, Śrī Rāṅkā quickly covered the bag with dust. Śrī Bāṅkā saw this and so asked, “What are you doing with the dirt?”

Śrī Rāṅkā then told her the truth. Śrī Bāṅkā said, “Others’ wealth is no better than clay. Do you still consider wealth to be important and desirable?”

At this, Śrī Rāṅkā said, “People call me Rāṅkā and you Bāṅkā because I am inferior and you are superior. Today I have seen this with my own eyes.”

Having overheard this, the Supreme Lord said to Śrī Nāmadeva “Just see how what I had said is true. Just consider how

both husband and wife have no desire for acquiring wealth.”

The Lord was thus victorious and Śrī Nāmadeva was defeated. The Lord then said to Śrī Nāmadeva, “If you are unhappy about Śrī Rāṅkā and Bāṅkā’s poverty and want to help them then let us go and fetch dry wood from the forest.”

Thereafter, the Lord and Śrī Nāmadeva gathered a great quantity of dry firewood, stacking it here and there. Later on, when Rāṅkā and Bāṅkā went to the forest to collect dry wood, they saw heaps of it at different places. They thought, “We are poor and unfortunate, but there must be someone even poorer and less fortunate than us who has come and gathered this wood.”

Thinking like this, they did not take any wood if there were just two or three sticks lying together. The Lord finally appeared and gave them His *darśana*. However, when he saw Śrī Nāmadeva accompanying the Lord, Śrī Rāṅkā angrily said, “How could you dare to bring the Lord all this way into the forest?”

The Lord then requested Rāṅkā to ask for a benediction. But with folded hands, Śrī Rāṅkā begged, “I do not want anything other than Your mercy.”

Upon hearing this, Śrī Nāmadeva folded his hands and said to Śrī Rāṅkā, “If you do not want anything then at least to honor the Lord’s words by accepting the remnants of His cloth as your ornament.”

Although Śrī Rāṅkā-Bāṅkā didn’t want to ask anything, just to please the Lord and His

devotee, Nāmadeva, they accepted this gift.

❀ Text 98 ❀

These devotees of the Lord were most benevolent well-wishers of all living beings in Kali-yuga. They were just like wish-fulfilling cows, fulfilling all the desires of the surrendered devotees. They were Śrī Lakṣmana, Śrī Laphara, Śrī Laddu, the renunciate Santa of Jodhpur, Śrī Suraja, Śrī Kumbhanadās, Śrī Vimāni, Śrī Kṣema Vairāgi, Śrī Bhāvana, Śrī Virahi Bharata, Śrī Nafara, Śrī Harikeśa, Śrī Haridāsa; Śrī Cakrapāṇī, who resided on the shore of Sarayū River at Ayodhyā; the goldsmith, Śrī Triloka; Śrī Pukharadi, Śrī Bijuli, and Śrī Uddhava.

❀ Commentary ❀

❀ Śrī Laddu ❀

Once, while traveling to various places in West Bengal, a devotee named Śrī Laddu arrived at a village where the people were averse to the Supreme Lord and His devotees. They had never learned how to respect the devotees of the Lord, and they were very sinful by nature. They observed a ghastly custom of sacrificing human beings for the pleasure of the Goddess. Upon his arrival at that place, it was a young *brāhmaṇa*

boy's turn to be sacrificed, but on the request of the local people, Śrī Laddu agreed to take his place. Thus the people took Śrī Laddu before the goddess. However, just as he was about to sacrificed, the goddess appeared from her deity in a ferocious form. Snatching the worshipers' sword, she began angrily cutting off their heads so that blood soaked her dress.

Thereafter, the goddess began dancing in front of the devotee, Śrī Laddu. Simply by seeing the Supreme Lord's devotee, she became happy and her eyes filled with tears. Indeed, she again and again fell down at the feet of Śrī Laddu.

This is how the Supreme Lord protects his devotees. After hearing of this incident, all the local people became devotees of Lord Hari.

Śrī Santa

Santa was so fond of serving saintly devotees that he was always busy making arrangements for their service. For this purpose, he would go door to door in various villages begging alms, which he would use for the service of devotees. This was his life's occupation.

Once, as he was begging for alms in a village, some devotees arrived at his house. The devotees inquired from his wife, "Where is Śrī Santa?"

In an angry mood, his wife replied, "He

is in the stove." By hearing her reply, the devotees could understand that she had no faith and devotion for serving saintly persons and so they simply left. By the arrangement of Providence, these devotees met Śrī Santa on the way. The devotees asked, "Where were you?"

Seated within his heart, the Lord caused Śrī Santa to say, "Whatever my wife said was correct. Actually, I was thinking about the heat of the burning stove."

Thereafter, Śrī Santa brought all the devotees to his house and served them *prasāda* to their full satisfaction.

Śrī Triloka

Śrī Triloka was a resident of the eastern part of India and a goldsmith by profession. By the mercy of the devotees and the Supreme Lord, he realized the essential truth of devotional service. Indeed, he took a vow to render service to the devotees, considering that to be the essence of devotion to the Lord.

Once, when the king of his country's daughter's marriage was being arranged, Śrī Triloka was given some gold and asked to make a pair of beautiful anklets. However, because he was always busy serving great souls, he had no time to prepare the anklets. When it was only two days before the marriage ceremony and still the ornaments had not been delivered, the king became

angry and ordered him men to go and arrest Triloka.

The men arrested Triloka and brought him before the king. The King chastised Triloka, saying, "You are very cunning. You promised to bring the ornament on time but did not do so. This is a great fault on your part. You had better give up your cheating ways or you will be punished."

The goldsmith, Śrī Triloka, politely said "O King, there is just a little bit of work left on your anklets. There are still two more days before for your daughter's marriage. If I don't bring the anklets on time, you can have me killed."

Finally, the day of the marriage arrived but still Śrī Triloka had not even touched the gold which was given to him by the king. He therefore thought, "When the king does not receive the anklets, he will certainly have me killed." He thus fearfully went and hid in the jungle.

That day, four or five of the king's men came to Śrī Triloka's house to take the anklets. Seeing the imminent danger faced by His devotee, the Lord took the form of Śrī Triloka and simply by His will made the anklets and handed them over to the king's men. Indeed, the Lord personally went to the royal palace and after saluting the king, handed him the anklets. While gazing at the anklets, the king became so enamored by their beauty that he could not take his eyes off of them. Thus he was very pleased with Śrī Triloka and rewarded him with much wealth.

The Supreme Lord in the form of Śrī Triloka took the wealth and returned home.

The next day, the Lord in the guise of Śrī Triloka arranged a grand festival where He distributed many gifts to all the people who came there. Delicious foodstuffs were cooked and everyone was fed so that the devotees, *brāhmaṇas*, and others took *prasāda* to their full satisfaction.

Thereafter, the Lord took the form of another devotee and went to Śrī Triloka as he was hiding in the forest. While offering him *prasāda*, the Lord said, "I went to Śrī Triloka's house and he gave me sumptuous *prasāda*. He also gave me this bag full of *prasāda* for someone who did not attend the feast."

Śrī Triloka asked, "Which Triloka are you talking about?"

The Lord said, "I am talking about the Triloka with whom no one compares within the three worlds."

The Lord then disclosed everything to Triloka so that his mind became peaceful and fully satisfied. Later that night, Śrī Triloka returned home, his heart filled with love and affection for the Supreme Lord. Understanding the extent of the Lord's causeless mercy upon His devotees, Śrī Triloka's devotion and love for the Lord increased more and more. While contemplating the Lord great mercy upon him, he considered himself to be most fortunate.

❀ **Text 99** ❀

These foremost of intelligent devotees of the Lord were like touchstones fulfilling the desires of their followers. They were Śrī Soma, Śrī Bhīma, Śrī Somanātha, Śrī Viko, Śrī Viśākhā, Śrīlamadhyāna, Śrī Mohadā, Śrī Mukunda, Śrī Ganesha, Śrī Trivikrama, Śrī Raghu, Śrī Vālmika, Śrī Vṛddhavyāsa, Śrī Jagana, Śrī Jhanjhu, Śrī Viṭṭhalācārya, Śrī Haribhu, Śrī Lālā, Śrī Haridāsa, Śrī Bāhabala, Śrī Rāghava, Śrī Lākhā, Śrī Chitara, Śrī Uddhava, Śrī Kāpūra, Śrī Ghāṭama, and Śrī Ghurī. All of these devotees were celebrated throughout the world. By their influence and activities they enlightened the conditioned souls of this world.

❀ **Text 100** ❀

These great souls nourished and protected the principles of devotional service throughout the world. They were all exalted, sober, and powerful personalities. They were Śrī Devānānada, Śrī Naraharīyānanda, Śrī Mukunda, Śrī Mahīpati, Śrī Saṅtarāma Tamolī, Śrī Khema, Śrī Raṅga, Śrī Nanda, Śrī Viṣṇu, Śrī Vidā, Śrī Bābū; the two sons of Śrī Bābū, Śrī Chitama and Śrī Dvārakādāsa; Śrī Mādhava, Śrī Māṇḍana, Śrī Rūpā, Śrī Dāmodara, the great saint Śrī Naraharī, Śrī Bhagavānī, Śrī Bālajī, Śrī Kānhara, Śrī Keśava, Śrī Prayāgadāsa, Śrī Lohaṅga, Śrī Gopāla, and Śrī Nāgu and his sons. All these devotees held unique and sublime positions

in devotional service and were accompanied by like-minded followers.

❀ **Text 101** ❀

Lord Śrī Nara-Nārāyaṇa is worshiped at Śrī Badarīkāśrama. Lord Śrī Jagannātha is worshiped at Śrī Jagannātha Purī, and Lord Śrī Raṇachoḍa is worshiped at Śrī Dvārakā. All the devotees of the Lord who resided in these three *dhāmas* were attached to their respective performances of devotional service. These devotees included Śrī Keśava, Śrī Harīnātha, Śrī Bhīma, Śrī Khetā, Brahmacārī Śrī Govinda, Śrī Bālakṛṣṇa, Śrī Baḍabharata, Śrī Acyuta, Śrī Apayā, Pāṇḍā Śrī Gopīnātha, Śrī Mukunda; Śrī Pratāparudra, the King of Purī, Śrī Guṇanidhī, and Śrī Jāgopāla.

All these devotees had taken a vow to render service to the Supreme Lord and His devotees throughout their lives. They were well-known among the general populace and they offered everything for the service of the devotees. Their only pleasure in life was to reside in the holy *dhāma* and thus have proximity to the Supreme Lord. They all had accumulated a great deal of piety in their previous lives and so they were greatly fortunate.

❀ Commentary ❀

❀ Śrī Pratāparudra ❀

Śrī Pratāparudra, who is described in this verse as Gajapatī, was the king of Śrī Jagannātha Purī. His full name was Śrī Pratāparudra Gajapatī. Although he was a king, he accepted the path of pure devotional service. In order to test his love for the Lord, Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu ignored him and refused to even look at him. Even when the other devotees tried their best, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu remained firmly fixed in His decision not to meet or even converse with the king.

Finally, during Rathayātrā, when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was dancing in ecstatic love before Lord Jagannātha, the king of Nīlācala, Śrī Pratāparudra, was able to have His *darśana* and thus considered himself to be most fortunate. Seeing the Lord absorbed in emotional love, the king gave up his fear and fell down at His lotus feet. The Lord picked up Śrī Pratāparudra and embraced him. In this way the king received the Lord's mercy so that he also became ecstatic in love of Godhead. Indeed, he would sometimes gaze at the Lord without blinking his eyes. Śrī Mahāprabhu engaged Śrī Pratāparudra in various services for the pleasure of Lord Jagannātha.

❀ Text 102 ❀

These devotees were magnanimous poets who spread the glories and fame of Lord Hari throughout the world. They were Śrī Vidyāpatī, Śrī Brahmādāsa, Śrī Bahoraṇa, the wise poet Śrī Bihārī, Śrī Govinda Svāmī, Śrī Gaṅgārāma; Śrī Rāmalāla, who resided at Varasānā and worked for the welfare of all; Śrī Priyadayāla, Śrī Paraśurāma, Śrī Bhakatbhāi, Śrī Khāṭika; Śrī Keśavācārya, who used the name Nandasūvana in his poetry; Śrī Āsakarāṇa, Śrī Rājāpurṇa, Śrī Bhīma, and Śrī Janadayāla. There is no end to the divine qualities possessed by these learned poets.

❀ Commentary ❀

❀ Śrī Govinda Svāmī ❀

There was a devotee poet named Śrī Govinda whose character was as sublime as his name suggests. While serving in the mood of friendship, he played with Śrī Nāthajī, the Lord of Śrī Govardhana. He was fully absorbed in a mood of ecstatic love of God. He was formally known as Śrī Govinda Svāmī. His behavior and activities were so attractive that simply by hearing of them, one's eyes become filled with tears.

Once, while Śrī Govinda Svāmī was playing with Śrī Nāthajī the game of tip-cat, the Lord was defeated but He entered the temple without paying the wager. Śrī

Govinda chased Him and then, when he saw Śrī Nāthajī standing in the Deity room, he angrily threw the balls at Him. The *pūjārī* saw this and considered it an offence and so he pushed Śrī Govinda Svāmī out of the temple. How could the *pūjārī* comprehend Śrī Govinda Svāmī's mood of friendship with the Supreme Lord?

After being driven out of the temple by the less intelligent *pūjārī*, Śrī Govinda Svāmī went on the shore of a *kuṇḍa* and sat down thinking that his friend, Śrī Nāthajī, would certainly come out of the temple and pass by on this road while going to the forest to play. Śrī Govinda Svāmī also thought that the person who had pushed him out of the temple must be taught a lesson.

Meanwhile, Śrī Lālajī began thinking about how the day will pass. He thought, "Unless I play with my friend again, the matter will not be resolved. Besides, he is sitting firmly on the way to the forest. How can I please him and pay him the wager?"

Meanwhile, Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha brought the *bhoga* offerings and set them in front of the Lord. However, the Lord did not accept these offerings. Śrī Gosvāmījī asked, "O Lord, why are You not accepting the offering of foodstuffs today?"

The Lord replied, "I am not at all happy with any of these offerings. If you want to feed Me then first satisfy My friend, Govinda. Actually, I had to pay him the wager when I lost but I ran away without paying it. That is why he threw the balls at Me. The *pūjārī* was not aware of this and so he pushed Govinda

out of the temple, considering him to be an offender. Quickly go and pacify the young *brāhmaṇa* and then I will accept your offering of foodstuffs."

When the head priest requested the Lord to go play in the temple courtyard instead of playing in the forest, the Lord said, "I don't feel happy to go to the forest without my friend, Govinda. I only like to play with him, but now he is sitting by the side of the road and speaking ill of Me in an angry mood. If I come out of the temple, he will beat me. I am so anxious that My entire body is trembling. If you can find him and bring him to Me after pacifying him, only then will I feel relief. Whatever food you offer, I don't accept ever a morsel. When My friend's anger is pacified, only then will I feel happy."

The priest went out in search of Govinda-sakhā. However, as soon as Govinda-sakhā saw the priest coming, he got up and ran away. Finally, with great difficulty, the priest was able to pacify him and bring him to the temple, assuring him that the Deity had said, "We will sit together and have our meal. We will embrace each other in great happiness so that our dispute will be resolved."

❁ Śrī Vidyāpati ❁

The great Maithilī poet, Śrī Vidyāpati, appeared in a *brāhmaṇa* family in the village of Viśapī in present day Bihar in the fifteenth century Samvat Era. He relished the transcendental pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-

Kṛṣṇa in the highest mellows of śṛṅgāra-rasa. Still, he always showed respect to all the demigods and goddess, as evidenced in his songs.

Once, Śrī Vidyāpati thought that he should engage a servant. In consideration of his devotion, Lord Śiva became his servant, serving him in the guise of a young boy named Uganā.

Once, when Śrī Vidyāpati was very thirsty and so asked for a glass of water, Uganā went to a secluded place and immediately brought water. Śrī Vidyāpati tasted that water to be just like Śrī Gaṅgājāla. When the mystery was finally understood, it became known that Lord Śaṅkara had brought Gaṅgā water from his matted hair. From that day onwards, Śrī Vidyāpati regarded Uganā as his Lord. Śrī Saṅkara told him not to reveal his identity to anyone.

One day, Śrī Vidyāpati's wife chastised Uganā for being late while carrying out some duty. Śrī Vidyāpati then revealed to her that the servant was actually his Lord and master, Śrī Saṅkara. When Uganā heard this, he immediately disappeared.

Śrī Vidyāpati wrote a song in separation from Uganā. He had great faith in the Gaṅgā. When Śrī Vidyāpati was about to give up his body, his family members took him to the shore of the Gaṅgā. On the way, Śrī Vidyāpati asked, "How far is the Gaṅgā? The relatives replied, "Six miles." Śrī Vidyāpati said, "Do not take me any further. We have come so far from home and now the Gaṅgā will personally come and give us her

darśana."

Indeed, Śrī Gaṅgā arrived at that place during the night. Even today, the railway station named Vidyāpati reminds everyone of this fact.

❀ Śrī Brahmadāsa ❀

Śrī Brahmadāsa wrote poetry glorifying the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Once, he had an argument with a mundane poet as to whose poetry was superior. It so happened that both of them threw their poetry into a fire. To everyone's surprise, Śrī Brahmadāsa's poetry remained undamaged while the poetry of the mundane poet was burnt to ashes. Seeing this miracle, the mundane poet fell at the feet of Śrī Brahmadāsa and praised his songs glorifying Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

❀ Śrī Paraśurāma Khātī ❀

According to another edition of *Bhaktamāla*, Śrī Paraśurāma Khātī was born in a Khātī family in the village Kalaru in the Mertā sub-division of the district of Nāgauḍa in Rajasthan in 1519 Samvat Era. In the beginning of his life, he was a devotee of goddess Dūrgā but by the mercy of his spiritual master, Śrī Pīpā, he became a devotee of Lord Rāmacandra.

Śrī Paraśurāma Khātī's daughter was suffering from leprosy. Śrī Pīpā gave her one

of his old cloths and as a result, her leprosy was cured.

Once, as Jayamala, the King of Mertā, was going to Jodhapura, the wheel of his chariot broke. Śrī Paraśurāma Khātī was summoned to fix the wheel but because he was engaged in serving a saintly person, he could not come. And yet, Lord Śrī Rāmacandra, taking the form of Śrī Paraśurāma Khātī, went and fixed the wheel of the chariot. After being repaired, the wheel did not even touch the ground. Seeing this miracle, Śrī Paraśurāma was again summoned.

Begging pardon again and again from the king, Śrī Paraśurāma said, “I could not attend to your service and so please forgive me.”

Only later on it was disclosed that Lord Rāma Himself had taken the form of Śrī Paraśurāma Khātī and fixed the chariot wheel. The king then requested Śrī Paraśurāma Khātī to have mercy on him by showing him the form of the Supreme Lord. Thus, by Śrī Paraśurāma Khātī’s appeal, the Supreme Lord manifested to give the king his *darśana*.

Being impressed by Śrī Paraśurāma Khātī’s devotional prowess, King Jayamala gave him five hundred *bighās* of land and also constructed a temple of the four-armed Supreme Lord. While performing his *bhajana* and after working for the welfare of others for one hundred and sixty-two years, Śrī Paraśurāma Khātī attained *samādhī* on the twelfth day in the month of Vaiśākha in the year 1681 Samvat Era.

❀ Śrī Keśavācārya ❀

Śrī Keśavācārya was born in a *brāhmaṇa* family on the twelfth day in the month of Kārttika in a village near Gwalior. His father was Mohana Miśra and his mother was Bhāgavatī-devī. The young child was named Keśava and he was educated by his father. From his very childhood, he followed Vaiṣṇava dharma and considered Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to be the essence of devotion. Seeing his detachment, his parents tried to get him married but he adamantly refused. Still, his parents gave him their blessings so that he could attain the perfection of his life.

Thereafter, Śrī Keśavācārya left home and went to Vṛndāvana. There, by the arrangement of Providence, Śrī Jñānadeva, a resident of Gahavara, came to Śrī Keśavācārya and gave him initiation. Śrī Jñānadeva ordered him to reside at Talahaṭī at Govardhana, and blessed him, saying, “Lord Harīdeva will manifest to you, being pleased with you.”

Accepting this order of his spiritual master, Śrī Keśavācārya never left Govardhana to go anywhere else. It is said that the Supreme Lord regularly talked with him.

One day, the Lord said, “I am living at Vichuā-kuṇḍa. Find Me and inaugurate My worship.”

Śrī Keśavācārya said, “I am mendicant *bābājī* who worships the Divine Couple, but You are alone.”

The Lord said, “When I lifted Govardhana Hill, all the residents of Vraja came

❀ King Purṇa Singh ❀

underneath it, as did Śrī Rādhā. I kept the hill on the tip of my finger for seven days and nights by the potency of Śrī Rādhā. This form of Śrī Harīdeva is a manifeststion of Śrī Rādhā's love and affection. This Deity is supremely merciful, the protector of the surrendered devotees, and the fulfiller of all desires. You will not have to beg for anything from anyone for My sake. When by My inspiration, someone voluntarily offers you something, accept it."

Seeing how the Deity had manifested Himself, all the local people were overjoyed and were ready to take Him away. However, an announcement from the sky declared, "Only one who can pick up the Lord can take Him away."

No one in the crowd was able to lift the Deity until finally, Śrī Keśavācārya picked up the Lord as if He were no heavier than a flower. He then kept the Deity in his cottage and began serving Him with love and devotion.

The Deity of Śrī Harīdeva ordered King Bhagavānadāsa in a dream to build Him a temple and so he constructed a large temple for the Lord and also gave five villages, the income from which would be used for the *rājabhoga* offering.

Later on, by the order of the Lord, Śrī Keśavācārya was married and had two sons named Śrī Paraśurāma and Śrī Bālamukunḍa. After giving the charge of serving the Lord to his two sons, Śrī Keśavācārya lived acted as a *paramahansa* and circumambulated Śrī Girirāja.

King Purṇa Sinha was the son of Prthvirāja Singha, the king of Āmera. His mother was Śrī Padāratha-devī. On the order of his father, he accepted the royal throne of Āmera in 1584 Samvat Era and then ruled the kingdom for six years, two months, and twenty-three days. King Purṇa Singha composed songs which he would sing before his Lord. If he sometimes neglected to do this, the Lord would give him orders in a dream to do so. One day, when the king failed to sing his compositions, the Lord disappeared from the temple. Later on, when King Purṇa Singha sang his glorification of the Lord, the Deity reappeared and gave him His *darśana*.

❀ Text 103 ❀

May all those devotees who had formerly resided in Śrī Mathurā-maṇḍala, as well as those who are currently residing in Mathurā-maṇḍala mercifully glance upon me. Some of those exalted devotees are Śrī Raghunātha, Śrī Gopīnātha, Śrī Rāmabhadra, Śrī Dāsusvāmī, Śrī Guṇjāmālī, Śrī Cituttama, Śrī Viṭṭhala, the great renunciate Śrī Marahaṭha, Śrī Yadunandana, Śrī Raghunātha, Śrī Rāmānanda, Śrī Govinda, Śrī Muralī Srotriya, Śrī Haridāsa Miśra, Śrī Bhagavāna, Śrī Mukunḍa, Śrī Daṇḍavatī Keśava, Śrī Caturbhujā, Śrī Caritra, Śrī Viṣṇudāsa and Śrī Veṇī. The author of this book prays to these devotees that they may place their

lotus feet upon his head.

❁ Commentary ❁

❁ Śrī Guṇjāmālī ❁

I also sing the glories of the devotees mentioned in this verse of Śrī Nābhā. The glories of the devotees who previously resided in Vraja, as well as those who are residing there at present, are unlimited.

There was a devotee named Śrī Guṇjāmālī. He received this name because he prepared garlands of *guṇjā*. After offering them to the Lord, he would wear them as *prasāda*. Formerly, he resided at Lāhora. Now hear a brief description of his characteristics.

Śrī Guṇjāmālī had a son who was married but soon thereafter died. One day, Śrī Guṇjāmālī called his daughter-in-law and said, "This is the house of your husband, and there is much wealth and property here. Utilize everything for the service of the Deity of Śrī Gopāla. Now, Śrī Gopāla is your husband." However, the daughter-in-law repeatedly insisted that she only wanted the opportunity to serve the Lord. Considering herself to be His maidservant, she dedicated her life to the Lord while considering material happiness as insignificant as straw in the street.

Seeing her firm faith, Śrī Guṇjāmālī engaged her in the service of Śrī Gopāla and gave his son's wealth to his wife. Thereafter, he left home and went to reside in Vraja.

There were boys in the neighborhood of Lord Gopāla who would enjoy playing by throwing sand and dust on each other. Śrī Gopāla would also play with those boys.

One day, the boys threw dust on Śrī Gopāla and so Śrī Guṇjāmālī angrily drove them all away. After that, he offered foodstuffs to Śrī Gopāla, but the Lord did not accept anything. When Śrī Guṇjāmālī asked, "O Lord, why have You not accepted the *bhoga* today?" the Deity replied, "Only when the boys return will I be happy and accept your offerings.

Śrī Guṇjāmālī said to his Lord, "Eat now, and in the morning I will smear dust all over Your body and also ask the boys to do this."

Still, the Lord did not accept Śrī Guṇjāmālī's offerings. Finally, when Śrī Guṇjāmālī called the boys with a promise of *laddus*, Śrī Gopāla became happy and accepted the offerings of *bhoga*.

❁ Śrī Daṇḍavatī Keśava ❁

Śrī Daṇḍavatī Keśava performed *daṇḍavat-parikramā* of Śrī Girīrāja. Once, in order to test him, the Lord came to him in the form of a devotee while he was performing his *parikramā* and said, "The earth is the wife of Lord Viṣṇu. Therefore you should not embrace another's wife at night."

Śrī Daṇḍavatī Keśava replied, "The earth is our mother and there is no harm or fault in lying on the lap of the mother."

Being pleased by this mood of Śrī Daṇḍavatī Keśava, the Supreme Lord revealed Himself.

❀ Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa ❀

Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa was the youngest of the seven sons of Śrī Kumbhajāḍāsa. He was an incarnation of Śrī Viśāla, an eternal companion of Śrī Nāthajāī.

Once, Śrī Kumbhajāḍāsa said to Lord Śrī Nāthajāī, “My Lord, I want to have the association of devotees every day because without good association, one cannot attain love of God.”

The Lord said, “When you beget a son, he will become a great devotee and thus give you the opportunity of having good association every day.”

When it was time for Śrī Kumbhajāḍāsa’s son to be born, the Lord took him with Him and entered the house of a Vrajavāsī to eat butter. Because the butter was kept in a pot which was hanging from the ceiling, the Lord climbed on Śrī Kumbhajāḍāsa’s back to reach it. When the Lord began taking butter from the clay pitcher, His *cāḍara* slipped from His body and so He manifested two more arms to catch it. Seeing the Lord’s four-armed form, Śrī Kumbhajāḍāsa was very pleased. Meanwhile, a *gopī* came and after opening the door, stood speechless while watching this scene.

The Lord threw some milk into the face of

the *gopī* and as she wiped her face, both the Lord and Kumbhajāḍāsa run away.

When the child was finally born, Śrī Kumbhajāḍāsa took him to Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha Gosvāmī, who named him Caturbhuja dāsa. Although the child looked like an ordinary boy to the people in general, he discussed devotional service and transcendental knowledge with Śrī Kumbhajāḍāsa and Śrī Nāthajāī.

Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa would play and joke with Śrī Nāthajāī. Once, thinking to make Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa a wrestler, Śrī Nāthajāī took him and entered the house of a Vrajavāsī. There the Lord enjoyed eating the milk and cream which He found. However, a young girl in the house thought that they were thieves and so loudly screamed. Lord Śrī Nāthajāī ran away from that house but His friend, Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa was caught and severely beaten.

Later on, Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa complained to Śrī Nāthajāī, saying, “You ate the cream and I got the beating.”

Śrī Nāthajāī smilingly replied, “How will you become a wrestler without being beaten?”

Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa composed new songs every day and sang them before the Lord.

❀ Śrī Venī ❀

It is said that Śrī Venī once contracted an incurable disease, but still, he did not consult a physician. Finally, the Supreme

Lord came to him in the garb of a physician. Simply by the Lord's *darśana* and touch, his disease vanished so that he became cured.

❀ **Text 104** ❀

In this age of Kali there have also been many lady devotees of the Supreme Lord whose glories are well known throughout the world. They are Śrī Sītāsahacarī, Śrī Jhālī, Śrī Sumatī, Śrī Śobhā, Śrī Prabhutā, Śrī Umābhaṭiyāni, Śrī Gaṅgā, Śrī Gaurī, Śrī Kumbarī, Śrī Uviṭhājī, Śrī Gopālī, Queen Śrī Gaṇeśadei, Śrī Kalā, Śrī Lakhā, Śrī Kṛtagaūḍa, Śrī Mānamatī, the greatly chaste Śrī Satyabhāmā, Śrī Yamunā, Śrī Kolī, Śrī Rāmā, Śrī Mṛgā, Śrī Devā, the two Jevās, Śrī Kikī, Śrī Kamalā, Śrī Devakī, Śrī Hīrā, and Śrī Harīcerī. All these lady devotees affectionately nourished and maintained the community of devotees.

❀ **Commentary** ❀

❀ **Queen Śrī Gaṇeśadei** ❀

King Madhukara Saha was the ruler of Orchā, and his queen was Gaṇeśadei. She performed many exemplary acts. Many devotees visited her palace and she would serve them with respect and devotion.

Once, a saintly person came and stayed in her palace for a long time because he enjoyed the comfortable life it afforded. One

day, finding Queen Śrī Gaṇeśadei alone in the palace, the saintly person asked, "Please tell me; where are the bags of gold coins and ornaments kept?"

Queen Śrī Gaṇeśadei replied, "If I had any such bags of wealth then I would have told you where they are kept. How can I tell you where they are when I don't have any? You know my heart."

The saintly person became angry when he heard this and stabbed her leg with a knife. However, when he saw the pool of blood that poured from the wound, the saintly person ran away. The queen was worried that the king might come to know about this incident. She thought, "If he comes to know of this then he will stop serving the devotees."

Thus the queen did not disclose this incident to anyone, and she bandaged her leg with a piece of cloth. When the king came to her quarters, the queen said, "Please do not come near me for I have some difficulty."

After a few days, the king understood that the queen was worried about something which she did not disclose. He went to her and mildly said, "My dear queen, please explain tell me about your distress."

When the queen continued to conceal her real feelings, the king became even more convinced that she was hiding something. Finally, the queen said, "I will tell you what has happened, but after hearing about it, do not harbor any hatred towards saintly persons."

The queen then narrated the entire

incident. The king was impressed by her respect for devotees and so he praised her and offered her more respect.

❀ Additional commentary ❀

Queen Śrī Gaṇeśadei was born in the year 1569 Samvat Era as the daughter of Śrī Annirudha Singh, the king of Kāśī, and his wife, Vijayakumbarī. In her childhood, she worshiped Lord Śiva. Being pleased by her worship, Lord Śiva gave her the benediction of devotional service to Lord Rāma. She was married to the Śrī Madhukara Saha, the King of Orchā, in the year 1596 Samvat Era.

Śrī Madhukara Saha was a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa who visited Śrī Vṛndāvana every year in the month of Śrāvaṇa to see the Jhulana-yātrā. After taking part in the festival, he would return to Orchā. Queen Śrī Gaṇeśadei spent most of her time in Ayodhyā because she was attracted to Lord Śrī Rāma.

Once, the king wrote a joking letter to her suggesting that she should return to Orchā with her Lord Śrī Rāmacandra. In her reply, Queen Śrī Gaṇeśadei said, “Yes, I will return to Orchā with my Lord Śrī Rāma, otherwise I will leave my body here.”

Then, due to feeling separation from Lord Rāma, Queen Śrī Gaṇeśadei went to the River Sarayū to give up her life. However, Lord Rāma immediately appeared on the lap of the queen and said, “I am prepared to go with you to Orchā.”

The queen sent a message to the king, saying, “I am coming with Śrī Rāma and so you should arrange for the Lord’s arrival with great pomp.”

The king constructed a huge temple for Lord Rāmacandra. In the year 1630 Samvat Era, the queen arrived at Orchā along with Lord Rāma from Ayodhyā. However, instead of staying in the temple built by the king, Lord Rāma stayed in the palace of the queen. Because of this, the king installed a Deity of Śrī Caturbhuja in the temple.

Because the Deity of Lord Rāma was standing, the queen always worshiped Him while standing. One day, the Lord said to the queen, “You should sit and worship Me because I cannot tolerate the inconvenience caused when you stand.”

The queen replied, “O Lord, You are my husband, my Lord, and my master. How can I sit in front of You? However, if You kindly sit then I can also sit while serving You.”

Lord Rāmacandra, who is always affectionate to His devotees, agreed and sat. This Deity of Lord Rāma in a sitting posture is still seen in Orchā. Queen Śrī Gaṇeśadei left this world on Thursday during *nirjalā* Ekādasi in the year 1642 Samvat Era.

❀ Śrī Jhālirānī ❀

Śrī Jhālirānī was the queen of Citorgaḍa and a disciple of Śrī Raidāsa. Once, when a group of devotees came to the palace,

the king restrained her from meeting and serving them. Indeed, the king issued strict orders to the guards that no one should enter or go out of the queen's palace. Still, by the Lord's arrangement, and by the strength of her devotion to the saintly persons, the queen went out of the palace and again returned without being seen by anyone. After witnessing this miracle, the king was impressed and so began serving the Lord and His devotees.

❁ Śrī Śobhā ❁

Śrī Śobhā rendered service to saintly persons even though her in-laws were envious of her. Especially the wife of her husband's brother was very much against her. Still, her husband's brother was favorable to her. Once, she was given a pair of bangles for safe keeping but the wife of her husband's brother stole them and buried them in the ground. And when her husband returned home, she complained that Śrī Śobhā had sold the bangles and used the money for the service of the devotees.

Being struck by this false accusation, Śrī Śobhā paid for the stolen bangles and then, by the Lord's grace, she found a pair of celestial bangles on her couch. She then gave these bangles to her husband's brother. Wondering how this had happened, the wife of her husband's brother dug up the earth and found the stolen bangles intact.

Seeing this miracle brought about by

devotion for the Lord, the wife of Śrī Śobhā's husband's brother begged pardon from her and returned the bangles. As soon as this was done, the celestial bangles disappeared. Later on, by Śrī Śobhā's influence, her in-laws became devotees of the Lord and rendered service to saintly persons.

Śrī Prabhutā

Śrī Prabhutā was the wife of Śrī Raidāsa. Once, when some devotees visited her house, she did not have even a single grain to feed them. Śrī Prabhutā approached her mother-in-law and asked to borrow her necklace. The mother-in-law gave her the necklace and so Śrī Prabhutā sold it with the help of her husband, Śrī Raidāsa, and used the money for serving the visiting devotees.

When Śrī Prabhutā's mother-in-law came to know of this, she locked her in a room without giving her any food or drink. Then, the Supreme Lord, taking the form of Śrī Raidāsa, went to the mother-in-law and returned the necklace. Only then was Śrī Prabhutā released so that she could return home.

When Śrī Prabhutā inquired from Śrī Raidāsa about how he returned the necklace, he said, "I did not return the necklace."

Later on, it was disclosed that it was the Supreme Lord who had returned the necklace after assuming the form of Śrī Raidāsa. This incident increased the faith and devotion of

both Raidāsa and Śrī Prabhutā.

❀ Śrī Umābhatiyānī ❀

Śrī Umābhatiyānī was the daughter of Mahārāvala Śrī Lunakaraṇa, the King of Jaisalmer. She was married to Rāvamāladeva of Jodhapur in the year 1593 Samvat era. Because she was inclined toward devotional service and her husband was adverse to it, she left him and returned to her father's house. Later on, being impressed by her devotional service, her husband sent Śrī Āsabadāsa Cāraṇa to pacify her. When Śrī Umābhatiyānī was assured that there would no longer be any impediments to her rendering devotional service, she sat on a palanquin and returned to her husband.

However, by divine inspiration, Umābhatiyānī changed her mind and neither returned to her husband's house nor her father's house. Instead, she stayed in a secluded place to perform her *bhajana*. She did not maintain a worldly relationship with anyone but remained devoted to the service of saintly persons.

One day, a devotee asked Śrī Umābhatiyānī to give him two thousand rupees for a festival in honor of his spiritual master. Śrī Umābhatiyānī immediately went and sold her gold ornaments and gave him the money. That night, by the mercy of the Lord, she saw that all her ornaments were in her room as before. Seeing the miracle brought about by serving devotees, her attachment for the

Lord and His devotees increased.

Once, a thief approached Śrī Umābhatiyānī in the guise of devotee and asked for her gold ornaments. She gladly gave her ornaments to the so-called devotee, but as soon as he went out of the town, he became blind. Then, when he returned to the town and gave the gold ornaments back, his vision was restored. It was the Supreme Lord who frightened the thief and thus made him return the gold ornaments. Later on, the thief fell down at Śrī Umābhatiyānī's feet and begged for forgiveness. He also became a devotee and, as he continued residing in that town, he took pleasure in serving the devotees of the Lord. In the year 1619 Samvat Era, after the death of King Māladeva, Śrī Umābhatiyānī entered his funeral pyre and thus left this world.

❀ Śrī Gaṅgābāi ❀

Śrī Gaṅgābāi worshiped the Supreme Lord, studied the scriptures, and performed *bhajana* after accepting initiation from her spiritual master before her marriage. At the time of her marriage, her spiritual master blessed her by saying that her husband would live for eighty years and remain healthy throughout his life. However, as Śrī Gaṅgābāi was going to her husband's house after the marriage, while passing through a forest, plunderers killed her husband and stole her ornaments. Immediately she remembered the blessings of her spiritual

master. Because of her faith in the words of her spiritual master, the Lord appeared there, punished the plunderers, and brought her dead husband back to life. By the mercy of the Lord, this devotee couple rendered devotional service for the rest of their lives.

❀ Śrī Gaurībāi ❀

Once, Śrī Gaurībāi heard from the mouth of a devotee that being attracted by the love and affection of Śrī Yaśodā, the Supreme Lord had appeared as her son and had drunk the milk from her breast. Śrī Gaurībāi's affection for the Lord became similar to that of mother Yaśodā and so He fulfilled her desire by appearing as a small child in her family who sucked her breasts at night.

❀ Śrī Kalābāi ❀

Śrī Kalābāi had firm faith in her spiritual master. Once, she heard that her spiritual master, along with some associates, was soon arriving at her village. Hearing this, she became very happy, but after a short while, she heard that her spiritual master was not coming to her village but had gone to another village. She immediately left everything, put down her small baby, and ran towards that village to meet her spiritual master. After walking for about ten miles, she came to where her spiritual master was

staying.

While being with her spiritual master, Śrī Kalābāi experienced such ecstasy that she forgot about her son and so did not return home. When at midnight she remembered her son, she became unhappy due of motherly affection and practically lost consciousness. Just then she saw that her son was lying on her lap and sucking her breast milk. Seeing this miracle, enacted by the mercy of the Lord, all the assembled people were astonished so that they gained firm faith in devotion for the lotus feet of their spiritual master and Lord Govinda.

❀ Śrī Jivā ❀

Śrī Jivā was born in a *brāhmaṇa* family and naturally taught spiritual subject matters to all the ladies who came in contact with her. Once, her son had measles and so people advised her to worship goddess Śitalā. However, Śrī Jivā simply remembered Lord Śyāmasundara and prayed to Him. Her husband warned her, saying, "You are not following my order. If our son dies then I will burn you alive."

By the arrangement of Providence, her son died and so she on his funeral pyre so that she would be burnt to ashes along with him. However, by the mercy of the Lord, her son came back to life. Seeing this wonder, everyone became devoted to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

❀ Śrī Jevā ❀

Śrī Jevā was the wife of Śrī Lākhā. She served her husband and other devotees while visiting Jagannātha Purī. Once, the Lord took the form of a devotee and informed Śrī Lākhā to arrange for a palanquin. After saying this, the Lord disappeared. This story will be told later in this book.

❀ Śrī Kikī ❀

Śrī Kikī was the daughter of Jārāmeru, and the wife of Lākhācāraṇa. When there was a drought throughout the country in the year 1600 Samvat Erak Śrī Kikī distributed wealth and food grains from the property of her ancestors to the people. And yet, by the mercy of the Lord, her wealth increased. Seeing her devotional prowess, many people became devotees of the Lord. Her son was the famous Śrī Naraharīdāsa, who became a celebrated devotee who wrote a book known as *Avatāracarita*.

❀ Text 105 ❀

Śrī Naravāhana, Śrī Vāhana Varīsa, Śrī Jāpū, Śrī Jayamala, Śrī Bīdāvata, Śrī Jayanta, Śrī Dhārā, Śrī Rūpā, Śrī Anubhav, Śrī Ūdārāvata, Śrī Arjuna (Gambhīre), Śrī Janārdana, Śrī Jītā; Śrī Dāmadara, a resident of Sāmpale village; Śrī Gadā, Śrī Īsrava, Śrī Mayānanda,

and Śrī Tulasīdāsa, a resident of Guḍile village, all possessed unlimited glories. I am the servant of these servants of the Lord, whose desires are never independent of those of the Lord.

❀ Commentary ❀

❀ Śrī Naravāhana ❀

Śrī Naravāhana was an elevated devotee, a resident of Bhau village, and a disciple of Śrī Hitaharivamśa. He was a landlord, and for the sake of serving saintly persons, he would plunder wealth from godless people.

Once, there was a businessman with a ship loaded with valuable goods. Knowing him to be a godless person, and considering that he refused to pay the tax, Śrī Naravāhana plundered all his wealth and locked him in a room. He also warned the businessman, saying, “If you give me more wealth equal to that which I plundered then I will let you go. Otherwise, I will kill you after a year.”

A maidservant was engaged to give him his meal every day. Seeing the suffering of the businessman, she became compassionate and advised him to loudly and continuously chant the names of Śrī Rādhā-vallabha and Śrī Hitaharivamśa. She said, “If anyone asks you, tell him that you are a disciple of Śrī Hitaharivamśa.”

The businessman did this, and as a result, Śrī Naravāhana returned all his wealth and requested him not to disclose the

incident to his spiritual master. Later on, the businessman became a disciple of Śrī Hitaharivaṁśa.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Once, the King of Jaipur jokingly said to Śrī Ghāṭama, "If you are an expert thief then steal something in our palace and prove it. I will reward you if you succeed."

Śrī Ghāṭama replied, "I have given up my stealing business, but I will certainly fulfill your desire."

Thereafter, Śrī Ghāṭama and Naravāhana dressed themselves as Queens of Udaipur and visited the palace of the King of Jaipur. Hiding their faces under their veils, they went to the temple of Śrī Govindadeva and took off all His valuable ornaments and replaced them with cheap imitations. Not even the temple guards could recognize what was happening.

Later on, they sent a message to the King of Jaipur, informing him that there had been a theft in his temple. The King of Jaipur was perplexed, being unable to understand how the Deity's ornaments could have been stolen. Finally, Śrī Naravāhana and Śrī Ghāṭama went to Jaipur and disclosed to the king what they had done. The king wanted to reward them as promised, but they did not accept anything. They only took Lord Govindaji's *prasāda*. These two devotees were very close friends.

❀ Śrī Jāpū ❀

Śrī Jāpū plundered wealth from godless people and used it in the service of saintly persons. Once, he robbed a goldsmith who recognized him so that there arose a heated argument. The king's men were summoned and they arrested both of them and put them in jail.

Śrī Jāpū was always anxious to serve devotees. Considering this, the Lord frightened the king in a dream and asked him to release Śrī Jāpū from jail. Still, Śrī Jāpū pleaded that he only wanted to be released along with the goldsmith.

The next day, by the order of the Lord given in a dream, the king released both of them. Later on, Śrī Jāpū confessed his entire history of plundering. By his influence, the goldsmith and king also dedicated themselves to rendering service to saintly persons.

❀ Śrī Rūpā ❀

Śrī Rūpā's characteristics have been described earlier in this book. He broadcast the glories of the spiritual master by compiling a book called *Harivyāsa-kathāmṛta*. He also wrote *Bṛhad-utsava-maṇimālā*, *Nitya-vihāra-padāvalī*, and *Lilā-vimśati*.

❀ Śrī Arjuna ❀

Once, Śrī Arjuna purchased a buffalo so that he could use her milk, yogurt, and ghee for the service of the devotees. After some days, someone stole his buffalo. Śrī Arjuna was upset with the Lord, thinking, “Why did You allow a thief to steal my buffalo? He angrily went to the jungle, and at that time, the Lord manifested the form of Śrī Arjuna and brought the buffalo back from the house of the thief. Later on, this pastime of the Lord was revealed.

❀ Śrī Dāmodara ❀

In the village of Kachariyā near Kishangarh in Rajasthan, Śrī Keśavānanda received a son by the mercy of the Lord, whom he named Dāmodara. Seeing his detachment from worldly life from his very childhood, his parents got him married at an early age. By the mercy of the Lord, his wife was a chaste devotee.

Dāmodara took shelter of Śrī Harivyāsadeva at Puškara. He had a son and a daughter, who was married at the village of Sāpla. After the death of his wife, Dāmodara began residing in a cottage in the village of Sāpla at the request of the local people. He went to Dvārakā every month to have the *darśana* of the Lord. The people then requested him to bring the Lord of Dvārakā to their village. So he took a container made of *tulasī* and went to Dvārakā to fetch the Lord after making a vow to not eat or drink anything until his

mission was accomplished.

However, the Lord, by His own potency, sent him back to the village of Sāpla. Thereafter, Nārada Muni came and pacified Dāmodara, saying, “After some days, a grocer named Lākha will come here and you will get the Deity from his sack.”

As predicted by the words of Nārada, Dāmodara received Deities of Śrī Yugala-kīśora and Śrī Balarāma from the sack of that grocer in the year 1474 Samvat Era. Śrī Dāmodara installed these Deities in his cottage. Later on, the grocer, Lākha, built a temple for Their Lordships and made arrangements for Their service. A water festival is held on the Ekādaśī of the waxing moon in the month of Bhādra each year.

❀ Śrī Mayānanda ❀

Śrī Mayānanda considered devotees to be his masters and himself their servant. Once, a devotee teased him by saying that the servant is wearing a *cādara* and the master is without a *cādara*. Śrī Mayānanda understood that devotee’s intention and immediately gave him his *cādara*. Miraculously, a divine *cādara* descended from the sky and wrapped around Śrī Mayānanda while the *cādara* from the devotee’s body disappeared. Seeing this wonder, the devotee begged forgiveness from Śrī Mayānanda for teasing him.

❀ **Text 106** ❀

The Supreme Lord has declared that the worship of His devotees is superior to His worship. Accepting this statement of the Lord as evidence, all these saintly persons accepted service to the devotees as being greater than service to the Lord. They have also demonstrated this fact by their personal examples.

These devotees are Śrīdāsa from Gāmri village, Sribhau from Jatiyan; Rāmadāsa, a businessman from Bundi; Srimohana Bāri and Śrī Dāu from Mandaut, Śrī Lakṣmana from Catathawala, and Śrī Bhagavān from Sunapatha. Śrī Gopāla delivered all the people of Salakhana village simply by the potency of serving saintly persons. Śrī Gopāla from Jovaner always treated the devotees of the Lord as worshipable.

❀ **Commentary** ❀❀ **Śrī Dāsa** ❀

Once, a group of devotees came to Gāmri village. Śrī Dāsa engaged himself in the service of the devotees so that after āraṭi, he forgot to put the Deities to rest. Early the next morning, when Śrī Dāsa went to the temple to offer *maṅgala-āraṭi*, he found that the Deity room was locked. When he knocked on the door, the Lord angrily said, "I will not open the door because you forgot

to put Me to rest since you were busy taking care of the devotees."

Śrī Dāsa responded, "My Lord, even one may make a mistake while serving You, but one should never make a mistake while serving the devotees. If You are angry because of this, I have nothing to fear."

The Lord was very pleased with Śrī Dāsa's reply indicating his devotion for the devotees. The Lord then opened the door and embraced His devotee, Śrī Dāsa.

❀ **Rāmadāsa** ❀
a businessman from Bundi

Śrī Rāmadāsa was born in a mercantile family in the town of Bundī in Rājasthan. He dedicated his life to the service of the devotees. Once, while selling his commodities in another village, he collected so much food grain. He put the food grain in a sack and carried it to his house. Since the sack was very heavy, the Lord approached him in a disguised form and said, "O brother, I am also going to Bundī and so I can carry your sack for some distance."

Śrī Rāmadāsa gladly gave Him the sack and the Lord carried it. The Lord walked swiftly and reached Śrī Rāmadāsa's house ahead of him. Śrī Rāmadāsa wondered, "Who is this person? He is a stranger and I don't know where He has taken my sack."

Still, Śrī Rāmadāsa had faith in the Lord and continued walking to his destination.

While going, he thought, "If there is warm water at home, I can have a nice bath, and if there is some rice and curry; that would also be nice."

Meanwhile, the Lord kept the sack at Śrī Rāmadāsa's house and said to his wife, "Seṭhaji is coming soon and so you should keep some warm water and some rice and curry for him."

When Śrī Rāmadāsa came home, he found warm water and curry and rice waiting for him. He thought, "The person who carried my sack is not an ordinary person; otherwise, how could He have understood my mind? He must be the Supreme Lord, appearing in a disguised form."

Thus, Śrī Rāmadāsa profusely lamented. Then, as he meditated upon Him, the Lord said, "You have worked so hard to serve saintly persons. I have only done a little service. I am very pleased that you have great faith in the service of the devotees."

Whenever devotees would visit Śrī Rāmadāsa's house, he would ask them what they wanted before preparing their meals. Once, some envious people complained to the king that Śrī Rāmadāsa had so much wealth and yet doesn't pay his taxes. The king arrested Śrī Rāmadāsa and raided his house, but no wealth was found.

Just then some devotees visited his house and so there was nothing to offer them. Śrī Rāmadāsa became very anxious when he heard about this and so he remembered Śrī Lakṣmaṇa.

Śrī Lakṣmaṇa immediately appeared and

released Śrī Rāmadāsa from the king's jail while He took the form of Śrī Rāmadāsa and remained there. People were very surprised to see Śrī Rāmadāsa in two places at the same time. Later on, everyone appreciated the potency of devotional service and the glories of the devotees.

❀ Śrī Lakṣmaṇa ❀

Śrī Lakṣmaṇa had great respect for the dress of the devotees. He always served the devotees with love and affection. Once, a sinful person dressed himself like a devotee and stayed in his house. One day, finding an opportunity, that evil-minded person stole the ornaments from the household Deity and left. And yet, the Lord took the form of a guard, arrested the thief, and brought him to Śrī Lakṣmaṇa.

Śrī Lakṣmaṇa said, "He is a devotee and he needed these things. Therefore let him keep them and go free."

The Lord in the guise of a guard could do nothing but let him go. Finally, by the mercy of the Lord and by seeing the influence of the devotees, that sinful person also became devoted to the Lord. He then returned all the Deity's ornaments and begged pardon for his offence.

❀ Śrī Gopāla ❀

The exalted devotee, Śrī Gopāla, a resident of Jovaner village, took a vow to render service to the devotees and accept their service as superior to that of the Supreme Lord.

There was a devotee in his family named Kākā. He had heard from the devotees how Śrī Gopāla considered the devotees to be his worshipable objects. To test Śrī Gopāla, Kākā went to his house. When Śrī Gopāla saw Kākā, he immediately fell to the ground to offer obeisances and then respectfully greeted him. With the intention of testing Śrī Gopāla, Kākā said, “I have a vow not to see the face of any woman. Considering this, how can I break my vow and enter your house?”

Śrī Gopāla said, “Please do not break your vow. I will arrange so that all the ladies of the house will hide so that you will not have to see them.”

After saying this, Śrī Gopāla hid all the ladies of the house and then took Kākā inside. However, just for fun, one of the ladies came before them and so Kākā became very angry and slapped Śrī Gopāla. Still, Śrī Gopāla did not feel any distress or anger.

On the contrary, he folded his hands and spoke to the guest in a sweet voice, saying, “O Mahārāja, you have slapped only one of my cheeks so that it has become fortunate, but my other cheek is bereft of your mercy. Therefore, I pray that you slap my other cheek.”

After hearing this, tears filled the eyes of the guest devotee. He fell down at Śrī Gopāla’s feet and said, “Your devotion for devotees is extraordinary. I cannot describe it with mere words. Your dealings with devotees are unique. I had heard from that you consider the devotees of the Lord as your worshipable objects. I was surprised to hear this and so I came to your house to test you. Today I have learned a great lesson from you; that a devotee should be tolerant and treat Vaiṣṇavas as being greater than the Lord.”

Śrī Gopāla felt embarrassed to hear himself being praised. With folded hands he said, “O Mahārāja, I am not at all qualified as you think. That devotees like you happily accept me as your servant is the basis of my life.”

❀ Text 107 ❀

❀ Śrī Lākhā ❀

The exalted devotee, Śrī Lākhā, was a resident of Muradhara in the Mārwar province of Rajasthan. He was such a powerful devotee that all the great kings would unhesitatingly execute his orders. He had firm faith in the holy name of Lord Rāma. He took great pleasure in smearing the dust from the feet of the devotees on his head.

Śrī Lākhā would go from his house to have the *darśana* of Śrī Jaganātha by offering

daṇḍavat prajāma all the way to the temple. The Lord assisted His dear servant and praised his devotion. The Lord also gave him wealth from the donation box for the marriage of his daughter.

Just as sewage, after entering the Gaṅgā becomes as good as the Gaṅgā, so Śrī Lākhā became a *paramahansa* complete with transcendental knowledge, purity, and devotion, although born in a low-class family.

❀ Commentary ❀

Although Śrī Lākhā belonged to a lower caste family, because of his being a devotee of the Supreme Lord, he was the crest jewel on the crown of society. Śrī Lākhā rendered service to saintly persons every day, satisfying them with offerings of various kinds of vegetables, dry fruits, sweets, and other varieties of *prasāda*. Indeed, he felt great satisfaction while feeding the devotees of the Lord.

Once, as Śrī Lākhā was engaged in the service of the devotees, there was a severe drought so that people were dying due to a lack of food. At that time, many pious and sinful persons approached him for help. Śrī Lākhā tried his best to feed them but finally, feeling despondent because of his inability, he decided to leave that place.

Seeing Śrī Lākhā's determination to leave, the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "O Lākhā, please hear Me with attention. Do not think of going to another place. Soon a bullock cart loaded with wheat and a cow

will come to your doorstep. When it arrives, take the cart into your house. Enclose the upper portion of the cart and make a hole at the bottom for taking out the grains of wheat. According to your needs, that exact quantity of wheat will come from that hole. Just grind the wheat and prepare *rotis*. Make ghee from the cow's milk and then put the ghee on the *rotis* and feed everyone."

After receiving the Lord's instructions, Śrī Lākhā woke up and described everything to his wife. They were very happy and they glorified the Lord. They no longer felt a necessity to leave that place. Then just as promised by the Lord, a bullock cart filled with wheat and a cow arrived at their doorstep. Śrī Lākhā followed the Lord's instructions and served everyone to their full satisfaction.

Now hear the description of how a cart load of wheat and cow arrived at Śrī Lākhā's house, and how much love and devotion he had for the Lord. Hear this attentively and accept the fact that devotional service to the Supreme Lord is the only means for crossing over this miserable ocean of material existence.

There was meeting in a village near the village where Śrī Lākhā resided. In that meeting it was resolved that donations should be given to a brother of one of the members who was living in poverty. This proposal was agreed upon, but a pious man present there stood up and said, "This kind of charity may give temporary relief but it will not award any spiritual benefit. For attaining spiritual

benefit, we should give our contributions to Śrī Lākhā, who is always engaged in serving saintly persons.”

Everyone agreed to this statement and they collected fifty mounds of wheat for Śrī Lākhā. The head of the village also donated his bullock cart and a cow for this purpose.

Once, Śrī Lākhā left his home in Marwar, having made a vow that he would go to Jagannātha Purī to have the *darśana* of Śrī Jagannāthadeva offering *dandavat pranāms* for the entire 1400 kilometer distance. He was able to sacrifice his body in the Lord's service because he had unbounded faith and love for the Lord. It would not be possible for an ordinary human being to accomplish such a challenging feat.

Acting according to his vow, Śrī Lākhā approached Jagannātha Purī while offering *dandavat pranāma*. Lord Jagannātha, who lovingly reciprocates with His devotees, then sent a palanquin to bring Śrī Lākhā. The *paṇḍas* took the palanquin and while going, they asked everyone they saw, “Who is Lākhāji?”

When they finally found Śrī Lākhā, they caught hold of his hand and said, “O devotee, kindly sit on this palanquin and come to see Lord Jagannātha. He has called for you.”

However, Śrī Lākhā folded his hands and replied to the *paṇḍas*, “How can I ride in a palanquin to come before the Lord? It would be an offence for me to do so. I would rather approach Lord Jagannātha and have His *darśana* while offering *dandavat pranāma*. Indeed, this is my vow. Kindly bless me so

that I can fulfill my vow by offering *dandavat pranāma* to approach Lord Jagannātha.”

When Śrī Lākhā thus refused to mount the palanquin, the *pāṇḍās* said, “The Lord has ordered us to quickly bring you so that you can decorate Him with the garland you have brought.”

After hearing this, Śrī Lākhā became fully convinced that the Lord had sent the palanquin and so he mounted it. Considering the unparalleled affection of the Lord for His devotee, Śrī Lākhā sat on the palanquin for His pleasure, knowing that Lord Jagannātha wanted to glorify His devotee in this manner.

Finally, Śrī Lākhā arrived at the temple of Lord Jagannātha. After seeing the Lord's enchanting form, he dedicated his life, mind, and body to His service. Indeed, Lord Jagannātha was so dear to Śrī Lākhā that he could not remain without thinking of Him for even a moment.

Śrī Lākhā had a daughter named Gaṅgābāi. Although she became of marriageable age, Śrī Lākhā did not arrange for her marriage. He thought, “Whatever wealth I have, or whatever wealth I get, belongs to the Supreme Lord and the devotees of the Lord. Everything should be used for the service of the Lord.”

One day, Lord Jagannātha said to Śrī Lākhā, “Take wealth from Me and arrange for your daughter's marriage.”

But Śrī Lākhā did not like this idea of the Lord. After residing at Jagannātha Purī for some time, Śrī Lākhā returned to his native place. He did not even ask for the Lord's

permission to leave, being ashamed to think that the Lord might give him something. At the time of his departure, Śrī Lākhā felt great pains of separation from the Lord so that his eyes became filled with tears. At that time, Lord Jagannātha ordered a devotee king in a dream to give Śrī Lākhā some wealth. The king stationed a guard on the road with the order that when Śrī Lākhā passed by, he should stop him and request him to return and accept the wealth for Lord Jagannātha's pleasure.

Thus it came to be that Śrī Lākhā was given one thousand rupees before departing Jagannātha Purī. And yet, he only used one hundred rupees for his daughter's marriage and with the rest of the money, he served the devotees in various ways. Indeed, when he fell down at the feet of the devotees, he felt transcendently blissful. His only happiness in life was to serve the devotees of Lord Hari with his body, mind, and wealth.

Śrī Lākhā was like an ocean of ecstatic love for the Lord. Even before he received one thousand rupees from the king, he was given money by some pious men for the marriage of his daughter. Still, Śrī Lākhā utilized all of that money for the service of saintly persons. This was the secret of his happiness.

According to Śrī Priyādāsa, Śrī Lākhā's characteristics are unlimited and impossible to describe and so he has only narrated a few incidents to the best of his ability. For those who relish hearing the nectarean descriptions of exalted devotees, the character of Śrī Lākhā stands out like a storehouse of love of

God. Such descriptions of exalted devotees maintain the devotional enthusiasm of the devotee.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Lākhā's wife was Jevābāi. His son was Devā, and his daughter-in-law was Lakṣmī. Once, after the death of his daughter, Gaṅgābāi's, husband, Śrī Lākhā went to her house to pacify her. Even though she was greatly aggrieved, she instructed her father-in-law and mother-in-law about the temporary nature of material existence and the eternity of devotional service to the Supreme Lord. When Śrī Lākhā saw her mood, he was very pleased and brought her home. Gaṅgābāi took a vow that she would worship the Supreme Lord for the rest of her life without deviation. This shows the influence of the association of devotees and service to the devotees.

❀ Text 108 ❀

❀ Śrī Narasī ❀

Śrī Narasī was a great devotee whose fame spread all over the world. He purified the state of Gujarat by his preaching. At the time of his appearance, the people of Gujarat were under the influence of the *smārta brāhmaṇas* and did not understand the path of devotional service to the Supreme Lord. Whenever people saw a devotee decorated

with *tilaka* and *kañṭhī-mālā*, they would make fun of him and criticize him.

Although Śrī Narasī appeared in such an environment, he became the crest jewel of Vaiṣṇavas. Indeed, he transformed the whole state a place for relishing devotional mellows. He purified the people of that country, delivering them from the pit of fallacious conclusions. He displayed numerous miracles and performed wonderful feats in a mood of devotion at various parts of the state. His heart was always filled with sweet mellows of devotional service.

❁ Commentary ❁

The exalted devotee, Śrī Narasī, was a resident of Junāgaḍa in Gujarat. When he was only five years old, his father and mother left this world so that there was only his brother, Varṇśidhara, and his brother's wife, Dūrītagaurī, who was very angry by nature, to raise him.

One day, Śrī Narasī came home and asked Dūrītagaurī for some water. She did not care that Śrī Narasī was tired and thirsty and she cruelly rebuked him with words that were painful to hear. Śrī Narasī felt insulted and angry so that his entire body began to tremble. He did not drink any water and simply left home, having decided to go somewhere and give up his life, considering the material body to be the source of all types of miseries.

Śrī Narasī went to a forest where there was temple of Lord Śiva. He fell down at the feet of Lord Śiva and revealed his mind to

him. Śrī Narasī remained lying in the temple of Lord Śiva for seven days without eating and drinking anything. Finally, Lord Śiva thought, "If someone comes to the door of a poor or insignificant man, he will take care of him and inquire about his well being. I am the lord of the demigods, Mahādeva. I should inquire from this person."

Thinking like this, Lord Śiva first mitigated Śrī Narasī's hunger and thirst and then appeared before him and said, "My dear child, ask from me any benediction you want."

Śrī Narasī replied, "My Lord, I do not know what benediction to ask for. Still, if you at all wish to give me something then give me that object which is most dear to you."

Upon hearing this, Śrī Saṅkara became perplexed because his most coveted object was not even known to his dear wife, Śrī Pārvatī, and even the *Vedas* fail to perfectly describe that Absolute Truth.

Śrī Mahādeva thought, "Once, in the past, I had given a benediction to Vṛkāsūra and as a result, I had to face great danger. Still, I cannot see how there could be danger in giving a benediction to this devotee. I feel that I should take all risks because this young boy is not an ordinary person, but a great devotee of the Supreme Lord who in the future will deliver many people. There is no need to think about this so much. I shall give him Lord Śyāmasundara, who is most dear to me. If I do not give him my most coveted object then I will be at fault for saying 'please accept a benediction.'"

Considering this, Śrī Māhādeva bestowed upon Śrī Narasī love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He also then took him to Vṛndāvana and showed him Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa* dance. After receiving the *darśana* of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Rāsabihārī, by the mercy of Lord Śiva, Śrī Narasī returned to his village and began performing *bhajana* after constructing a cottage. After some time, at the age of nine, Śrī Narasī was married to a *brāhmaṇa* girl named Mānikagaurī. When she was sixteen years old, they had two daughters named Kumbarbāi and Ratanabāi, and a son named Śyāmaladāsa.

Even while Śrī Narasī was a householder, he preached the principles of devotional service to Śrī Hari. Many devotees and saintly persons came to see him. He satisfied them all by rendering them service. He pleased the Lord and His devotees by regularly chanting the holy names and glorifying the pastimes of Hari. He installed a Deity of the Lord and daily served Him by observing the prescribed rules and regulations.

Because of his pure devotion, Śrī Narasī's glories increased day by day. However, seeing this, the local *brāhmaṇas* became jealous and angrily tried to disturb him in various ways. They made attempts to put impediments on the path of Śrī Narasī's *bhajana*. These envious people considered Śrī Narasī's *bhajana* and *kīrtana* to be a disturbance to society. They never considered Śrī Narasī to be a pure devotee of the Supreme Lord.

In spite of this, the most intelligent Śrī Narasī remained merged within the ocean of

Śyāmasundara's beauty. How can those who are sinful and envious harm a pure devotee? Śrī Girīdhārī always gave him protection from all sides. Indeed, Śrī Narasī could perceive the Supreme Lord as being present in all directions.

Once, some devotees arrived at Junāgaḍa while traveling to the holy places of pilgrimage. They inquired from people in the market place if there was a devotee in the vicinity. They wanted to get donations so that they could travel to Dvārakā. Those who were envious of Śrī Narasī told them, "Śrī Narasī is a famous devotee of this area. At first, he may drive you away with harsh words while refusing to help you get charity. If you really want him to help you then catch hold of his feet and offer him obeisances. By doing so, he will fulfill your desires."

After saying this, those sinful people showed the visiting devotees the way to Śrī Narasī's house. Upon their arrival, Śrī Narasī greeted them respectfully and affectionately embraced them. Śrī Narasī said, "I am very fortunate because you have come to my house. Kindly instruct me—what can I do for you? Whatever I have is actually meant for your service."

The devotees who were traveling to Dvārakā fell at the feet of Śrī Narasī and begged, "Kindly arrange for someone to give us a donation of seven hundred rupees so that we can go to Dvārakā."

Śrī Narasī thought, "There is clearly a conspiracy by some envious people, but I think that it is also the inspiration of the

Lord of Dvārakā. It is the Lord's directions that sent these devotees to my house."

Thinking like this, Śrī Narasī gave them assurances that they could fulfill their desire. He said, "Our merchant, Śrī Śyāmbalasaha, is very liberal and magnanimous. Go and give him this note and he will give you the required amount so that you can travel without anxiety."

Taking the note, the devotees went to Dvārakā Purī, but they became tired while searching for the house of Śrī Śyāmbalasaha in the market. They became thirsty and hungry and could not find out the address of Śrī Śyāmbalasaha's residence. Finally, they left the city, all their hopes shattered, feeling that they were drowning in an ocean of distress.

Seeing the devotees in a distressed condition, the Supreme Lord, Dvārakādhīśa, took the form of the merchant. So as to honor Śrī Narasī's note, He approached the devotees with a bag full of money and said, "Who has the note from Śrī Narasī? Please come forward and take this money."

A devotee replied, "O Seṭhajāī, it is very good that You have come. We were looking for You all over the market but could not find Your residence."

The Lord in the form of Śrī Śyāmbalasaha said, "I am sorry for the delay in giving you your money. The reason for the delay is that I am not accessible to the businessmen in the market. I live in a solitary place and only pure devotees of the Supreme Lord know Me. Kindly take this money and use it to

feed the devotees."

Saying this, the Lord gave the devotee the money and also gave him a note in reply. The note read: "There is no lack of money in My possession. You may send notes like this, again and again."

When the traveling devotees returned after having the *darśana* of Dvārakā Purī, they gave the note of Śyāmbalasaha to Śrī Narasī. By reading that note, Śrī Narasī became immersed in an ocean of ecstatic love as he embraced the devotees.

Śrī Narasī said, "Please tell me; did you personally meet Śyāmbalasaha?"

The devotees replied, "Yes, we met Him in a spirit of great love."

After hearing this, Śrī Narasī began dancing with joy and he embraced the devotees, again and again. The devotees also became jubilant to realize that the Seṭhajāī was actually Lord Dvārakādhīśa. This is an example of the power of association with pure devotees. Such was Śrī Narasī's love and affection for saintly persons which caused Śrī Dvārakādhīśa to fulfill all his desires.

Śrī Narasī's daughter was residing in the house of her in-laws when she gave birth to a baby boy. According to worldly etiquette, Śrī Narasī should have given her some presents, but he had nothing to give. The girl's mother-in-law chastised her every day, saying, "Your father is very poor and a miser as well. He did not send anything for you."

She spoke like this because she had no respect for a devotee like Śrī Narasī. Rather, she was a faithless person. When it became

unbearable for the girl to hear the words of her mother-in-law, she sent a message to her father which said, “My mother-in-law constantly chastises me and gives me trouble. My heart burns while hearing her hate-filled words. If you have anything to give then kindly come here and give it to me. The birth of my son is an occasion for giving gifts.”

After receiving the message from his daughter, Śrī Narasī mounted a bullock cart and set out for the town where her daughter lived. A *brāhmaṇa* was sent ahead to give the news of his arrival. When the daughter heard the news of her father’s arrival, she immediately went out to welcome him, but when she saw that there was nothing in the bullock cart, she understood that her father had not brought anything to give her and so her mouth dried up and she became exceedingly unhappy.

The girl said, “My dear father, if you had nothing to give then why did you come here?”

Śrī Narasī replied, “My dear child, do not worry. Go and tell your mother-in-law to make a list of the things she would like for herself and for others and give it to me. She should not feel shy to write whatever she likes. Indeed, she can list the most expansive items, and in a huge quantity as well.”

When the girl went and conveyed this message, the mother-in-law became irritated and malicious. She angrily said, “Your father has come here to make fun of us.”

Finally, the envious mother-in-law wrote a

list of the names of all the males, females, and children in the village and said, “Let your father give clothes and ornaments to all of them.”

Śrī Narasī’s daughter brought the list and gave it to her father. Śrī Narasī read the list and returned it to her, saying, “Go again and tell your mother-in-law to recheck the list. If she somehow or other forgot to include anyone’s name, she can add it.”

The mother-in-law became very angry when she heard this and she added two stone slabs to the list. Just to insult Śrī Narasī, she arranged a brokendown hut for his residence. Śrī Narasī, who was an exalted devotee, stayed in that brokendown hut and was actually very pleased to live there. The mother-in-law sent a bucket of boiling water for his bath. At that time, there was a sudden downpour and Śrī Narasī happily bathed in the rain.

After bathing, Śrī Narasī closed the door of his shack, keeping the list on a table, and sat down to chant the holy names of Lord Hari while playing his *tāmpurā*. Very soon, by the mercy of the Supreme Lord, an abundance of clothes and ornaments filled the room. Śrī Narasī happily distributed everything to the ladies and gentlemen, the young and the old, so that everyone looked beautiful and happy. After this, people everywhere glorified Śrī Narasī and his divine qualities. The most surprising thing was that along with the clothes and ornaments, two slabs of gold were given as a special present to the father-in-law and mother-in-law.

By the arrangement of Providence, the name of a woman was missing from the list. Therefore, there was no cloth given for her to wear. She did not want to take cloth from others and so she firmly said to Śrī Narasī, “I will accept cloth from that person who has supplied all these clothes and ornaments to all the men and women.”

Śrī Narasī’s daughter said to her father, “Please give clothes to this woman so that I will not have to feel embarrassed.”

Śrī Narasī prayed to his Lord and the Lord again came and gave cloth and ornaments to the woman. Seeing her father’s influential devotional service, the daughter became satisfied. Thereafter, she returned to her father’s house after taking permission from her in-laws.

Śrī Narasī had two daughters named Kumbarbāī and Ratanabāī, both of whom stayed at home and engaged in the devotional service of the Lord. One of them left her in-laws’ house after her marriage upon seeing the influence of her father on the occasion of the birth of her baby boy. The other daughter never married.

One day, two ladies came to Junāgaḍa and while wandering throughout the town, sang beautifully. That was their means for earning their livelihood. And yet, even though they roamed throughout the town, they could not collect any money. Seeing them hopeless and helpless, someone suggested that they meet Śrī Narasī. Thus, the two ladies came to Śrī Narasī’s door and began singing.

However, Śrī Narasī said, “You will not

receive any money from me and so you will only feel disappointed and sad. If you really want to attain love of God then you should shave your heads and take mantra initiation. You should engage in constantly worshipping the Supreme Lord.”

The two ladies liked this advice and they began residing at Śrī Narasī’s place. Later on, they became great devotees by the influence of the association of a pure devotee and their performance of *bhajana* and *kīrtana*.

In this way, the two daughters of Śrī Narasī and the two singers began living together. They would sing the glories of Lord Hari and dance in love of God. They brought happiness to the minds of many people. But seeing their chanting and singing, a royal minister named Sālaṅga, who was Śrī Narasī’s maternal uncle, complained to the king, saying, “This conduct is completely opposed to religious principles! My cousin’s sisters are dancing in public with the daughter of Śrī Narasī.”

After convincing the king by speaking in this way, Sālaṅga arranged for a meeting of learned scholars and *sannyāsīs* while urging them, “Challenge Śrī Narasī to a scriptural debate and expose him as an impostor so that he can be driven out of the kingdom.”

On the order of the king, four guards came to Śrī Narasī and said, “You must come to the royal court because the king has summoned you. There, you will engage in a debate on scriptural subject matters.”

After hearing the king’s order from the mouth of the guards, Śrī Narasī said to the

four women, “You must leave this place and go elsewhere. I am afraid of the king and his punishment.”

Still, the ladies replied, “O father, please do not feel afraid. What can the king do to us? We will all go to the royal court with you.”

After saying this, the four ladies, along with Śrī Narasī, went to the king’s palace while singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments. Being absorbed in the mellows of chanting the holy names of Lord Hari, they arrived at the royal court. When the members of the assembly who had complained about the ladies saw them, their mouths dried up. Indeed, they felt disappointed.

Thereafter, the learned scholars in the assembly asked Śrī Narasī, “Why do you sing and dance with young girls and roam about the town with them? What kind of devotional practice is this? In which literature is this behavior condoned?”

Śrī Narasījī plainly replied, “Your scriptural knowledge has become stale and covered with dust. Even after being spiritually educated, you are far away from devotional service to the Supreme Lord. You should have known that in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Śrī Sukhadeva Gosvāmī has glorified the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* of Mathurā who performed sacrifices. Later on, their husbands condemned themselves and praised their wives. Therefore it is not at all objectionable for men and women to engage in the service to the Supreme Lord together.”

After hearing this clear and definitive answer of Śrī Narasī, all the opposing learned scholars became silent, being unable to give a rebuttal.

Then a devoted *brāhmaṇa* who was present in the assembly said, “O King, when Śrī Narasī went to give his daughter presents, I witnessed his power and influence with my own eyes.”

The *brāhmaṇa* then narrated the entire story in that royal assembly. After hearing about this incident, the king was very impressed and he fell down at the feet of Śrī Narasī and begged for his forgiveness. He said, “You can go home fearlessly and live happily. You have kept the Supreme Lord under your control. Please remain absorbed in devotional service without interruption.”

Now hear another story and keep it within your heart. Whenever Śrī Narasī would sit in the temple in front of the Deity and sing beautifully in the *kedārā raga*, the Lord’s flower garland would spontaneously fall on his lap. In this way, Śrī Narasī would receive the Lord’s blessings and feel intense gratitude. Those who were envious of him simply faced difficulties and unhappiness in their lives.

After witnessing this merciful behavior of the Lord, some envious persons approached the king and explained to him that the widespread fame of Śrī Narasī was artificial and simply based on lies. They claimed that it was simply propaganda that spread a network of illusion to cheat others. They said, “He prepares flower garlands with a

thin thread so that when he offers them to the Lord, the thread breaks due to the heavy burden of flowers. Then he claims that the garland was given to him by the Lord because of his melodious *kedāra rāga*.”

However, the king’s mother was a devotee who had great faith in the devotees of the Lord. Therefore she advised her son, saying, “Do not pay attention to the words of these sinful cheaters. They are trying to poison your mind.”

And yet, the king did not follow the advice of his mother because his nature was very passionate and he was very proud. His good intelligence had been taken away by *māyā*. One day, the king went to the temple where Śrī Narasī sang in the *kedāra rāga* and received the Lord’s garland *prasāda*. He brought strong thread and prepared a garland with it. He offered the garland to the Deity and asked Śrī Narasī to sing in glorification of the Lord. As usual, Śrī Narasī sang, but he did not sing the usual *rāga* and so the Lord’s garland did not fall down.

When even after Śrī Narasī had sung for a long time and the Deity’s garland remained intact, the envious people who had complained against him were overjoyed. Śrī Narasī then sang in his own mood, expressing his internal desire.

Śrī Narasī sang, “O Lord, I recognize who You really are. You are a cowherd boy of Vṛndāvana and are completely uneducated in the arts of love. You have placed a garland of flowers on Your chest. I am helpless because this cowherd form of Your’s is

deeply rooted within my heart. Even if I try to convince my mind in a thousand ways, it still does not budge an inch from Your lotus feet. The form of Lord Nārāyaṇa described in the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas* is very magnanimous and great, but Your cowherd form is all that I can think of. Who can remove Him from my heart? I am always anxious for seeing Your beautiful and youthful cowherd form. If You do not want to give me the remnants of Your flower garland, it will not harm me in any way. Rather, this neglect of Your devotee will taint Your reputation as being an ocean of mercy. Be happy with the garland around Your neck and let Your devotee be beaten to death.”

There lived a wealthy merchant named Dharaṇīdhara in the town where Śrī Narasī resided. He had two wives. His first wife was a devotee of the Lord who while singing His glories would pray to have the *darśana* of Lord Śyāmasundara.

Once, Śrī Narasī blessed her by saying, “This is a very good aspiration and so rest assured that you will have the *darśana* of the Lord.”

The Lord actually made these words of Śrī Narasī prove true. The Lord took the form of Śrī Narasī and went to the house of the merchant in order to return the transcript of the *kedāra rāga*, which he had leased. Arriving at the merchant’s door, the Lord said, “Open the door!”

When the merchant’s devoted wife opened the door, she saw the Lord standing before her in the form of Śrī Narasī. The merchant

was sleeping at that time. His wife called him, saying, “Śrī Narasī has come. Take his money and give him the lease agreement.”

The merchant replied, “You take the money from Him and give Him the agreement.”

The devoted wife did as she was told. She then prayed, “O Lord, kindly accept some food in our house.”

In answer to her prayer, the Lord accepted some milk and sweets and also profusely blessed her. Miraculously, the Lord in the form of Śrī Narasī brought both the *kedāra rāga* from the house of the merchant, as well as the receipt for his payment. The Lord handed these over to Śrī Narasī. Overjoyed, Śrī Narasī immediately began singing in the *kedārā rāga*. When Lord Śyāmasundara heard his singing, He immediately stood up from His throne and personally went and put His garland around Śrī Narasī’s neck.

All the assembled devotees and others saw this miracle and so they began to glorify the Lord and His pure devotee. After seeing this, the king fell down at the feet of Śrī Narasī and from that time on, acted as a devotee of the Lord. In this way the Lord manifested His affection for His devotee. However, the envious and sinful people felt ashamed and so left that place because they did not want to bow down before the Lord and His devotees. Without the mercy of the Supreme Lord, no one can make any advancement on the path of devotional service.

Once, to find a suitable groom for his daughter, a *brāhmaṇa* sent his priest to

Junāgaḍa. The priest searched for a suitable husband in each and every *brāhmaṇa*’s house. Although he met many *brāhmaṇa* boys, he did not like any of them. Then someone told the priest that there was a beautiful young man at the house of Śrī Narasī and so he should go and see him.

The priest went to Śrī Narasī’s house in a joyful mood. When he inquired about the young boy, Śrī Narasī called for his young son and showed him to the priest. When the priest saw this young man, he was very pleased, being captivated by his beauty. Immediately he took sunned rice from his bag and put *tilaka* on the young man’s forehead.

Śrī Narasī said, “The girl’s father must be well to do, and an accomplished person. I do not consider myself worthy of getting my son married into such a family.”

The priest said, “O devotee, what are you saying? You are very qualified and superior in all respects. I have accepted your son, Madana Mehata, and have applied *tilaka* to his forehead, thus consecrating the relationship.”

After saying this, the priest quickly departed and explained everything in detail to the girl’s father. After hearing everything, the *brāhmaṇa* slapped his head and said with disgust, “O, this man is a poor uneducated *brāhmaṇa*. It is as if you have drowned my daughter in a deep well. Return there and rub off the *tilaka* from the boy’s forehead. I do not want my daughter to marry that boy.”

After hearing this, the priest became very

sad. He tried to reason with the *brāhmaṇa*, saying, “First cut off my right thumb and then order me to rub out the *tilaka*. Please try to understand that I had carefully considered the matter and only then had performed the *tilaka* ceremony. How can I falsify my actions?”

Finally, feeling very aggrieved, the girl’s parents concluded, “We can understand that our daughter is very unfortunate. Anyway, what has happened has happened. Now we must make our daughter happy by inviting the groom’s party, sumptuously feeding them, and giving them a large dowry.”

After some days, when it was time to send the engagement invitation, the priest wrote it, went to Śrī Narasī’s house, and gave it to him. Śrī Narasī did not even look at the invitation, but simply put it aside. As his daily function, he began chanting the holy names of the Lord while playing his *karatālas*. Finally, there were only four days remaining before the engagement and yet Śrī Narasī did not even think of it.

At that time, the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, along with His queen, Śrī Rukmiṇī, arrived at Śrī Narasī’s house. Śrī Narasī quickly ran to receive the Lord and fell down at His lotus feet to offer obeisances. Seeing that Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rukmiṇī had arrived, the bride’s family was summoned so that the marriage ceremony could be pompously performed. Varieties of foodstuffs were cooked and the ladies sang auspicious songs. Musical instruments were played all around.

Queen Rukmiṇī personally decorated

the face of the groom. After the groom was gorgeously decorated, he was placed on a horse and taken throughout the town in a procession. Thereafter, there was a feast and countless people came and had their meals to their full satisfaction. Some envious *brāhmaṇas* packed a great deal of the food in bags in the hopes that it would prove insufficient and Śrī Narasī dāsa would be insulted. But still, there was abundant food in the storerooms so that there was no dearth of anything, by the mercy of the Lord. The people in the groom’s party were well-decorated and accompanied by elephants, horses, camels, chariots, and palanquins. In this opulent manner, the party of Śrī Narasī dāsa departed for taking part in the marriage ceremony.

As the marriage party was leaving, the Lord caught hold of Śrī Narasī dāsa’s hand and said, “You should accompany the marriage party. Just carry out My order, and I will take care of everything while remaining incognito.”

Śrī Narasī dāsa said, “My Lord, do whatever You wish. My only happiness is keeping Your beautiful form within my heart and singing Your glories while playing the *karatālas*.”

The Lord understood that Śrī Narasī dāsa was not going to do anything and that nothing should be expected from him. He therefore considered, “I have to take the responsibility Myself.”

The groom’s party had almost reached the destination of the in-laws’ village and so they erected tents so that they could rest.

The bride's party had no information about this and so they were worried because the auspicious time for the marriage was coming soon. Finally, when some of them went and searched for the groom's party, they saw a huge camp of tents set up outside the village. Out of astonishment due to seeing such a grand arrangement, they asked someone, "Whose party is this?"

That person replied, "This is the marriage party of Śrī Narasī Mehata's son."

The people were surprised to hear this and so began discussing the matter, saying, "This marriage party is not befitting the standard of Śrī Narasī dāsa. It appears as if this party has come from the heavenly planets. This procession contains countless people, vehicles, and carriers. How could Śrī Narasī dāsa arrange for such a grand procession?"

These people returned and told everything to the bride's father, who became bewildered after hearing everything. Then he became somewhat sober and requested his party members not to make fun of their guests. Meanwhile, the priest arrived after seeing the huge marriage party camped outside the town. Indeed, he was jubilant after seeing such an opulent arrangement on the groom's side.

He joyfully said, "The amount of wealth in your possession is not even enough to feed grass to the groom's elephants and horses. Go and see how there are so many people in the marriage party, spread all over the four directions. This is the power and influence of Śrī Narasī dāsa's devotional practice.

Actually, devotional service to the Lord is real wealth and the very essence of existence. Everything else is useless and temporary."

After hearing the descriptions of the groom's marriage party, the bride's father personally went to see it, his pride completely smashed. He took shelter of the priest and requested, "Please save me and my prestige. I take shelter of you."

The priest replied, "Sincerely take shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Narasī dāsa. Pray to him in such a way that all your desires will be fulfilled."

Accepting this advice, the bride's father approached Śrī Narasī dāsa, fell down at his lotus feet, and said, "My dear sir, please be merciful to me."

Śrī Narasī dāsa embraced him and then showed him the lotus face of Śrī Śyāmasundara. Thereafter, the marriage ceremony of Śrī Narasī dāsa's son was smoothly and pompously performed. All the assembled people from both the bride's party and the groom's party were pleased in all respects.

The commentator, Śrī Priyādāsa, says that whatever characteristics of Śrī Narasī dāsa he had known about or had heard about from others, he has described to the best of his ability. Everyone should hear these narrations and make their lives filled with devotional service to the Lord.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Once, out of envy, just to insult Śrī Narasī

dāsa, his elder brother, Vamsīdhara, and the head of the village, named Sāraṅgadhara, sent a prostitute to him in the guise of a lady devotee. By the good association of Śrī Narasī dāsa, who explained to her the temporary nature of the material world, the mind of the prostitute was purified. Later on, Sāraṅgadhara was bitten by a snake and died. And yet, Śrī Narasī dāsa brought him back to life by giving him the Lord's *caraṇāmṛta*. Still, godless people thought this wonderful act was just some kind of magic trick.

The wife of Śrī Narasī dāsa's maternal uncle, Anantarāo, would go and hear discussions of the Supreme Lord from the mouths of devotees. She served Śrī Narasī dāsa by supplying him drinking water. However, being angry, the envious Anantarāo stopped his wife from performing this service for Śrī Narasī dāsa. Indeed, he locked her within a room. And yet, to his utter surprise, he saw his wife both in his house and at the *sat-saṅga*. He was amazed to see this miracle.

Another time, when a member of a low caste family requested him to come and perform *kīrtana* at his house, Śrī Narasī dāsa gladly went there and performed *kīrtana*. He did not make any distinction in terms of caste, creed, religion, or nationality.

Once, Śrī Narasī dāsa's wife, Māṇakagaurī, was suffering from high fever. Śrī Narasī dāsa saw that her condition was critical and so, as usual for a devotee, he took shelter of the Supreme Lord and began to remember Him. The chanting of the holy names of Lord Hari continued and within a short

time, Māṇakagaurī left her body and went to the spiritual world. Even though he was aggrieved, Śrī Narasī dāsa remained fully absorbed in his *bhajana* and meditation on the Supreme Lord.

Some higher caste people of his town ostracized Śrī Narasī dāsa from their society because he performed *kīrtana* in the house of a low class person. Still, this had no effect on Śrī Narasī dāsa. The Supreme Lord enacted a pastime in this regard. There was a feast at the house of an aristocratic and wealthy person in Jūnāgaḍa named Śrīkṣṇarāo Nāgara. This feast was held in the name of his mother. When all the *brāhmaṇas* sat down to have their meals, each of them saw that a low-born person was sitting next to them. Thus each and every *brāhmaṇa* considered himself to be fallen, and that to purify themselves, they would have to bathe in the Gaṅgā.

But there was one *brāhmaṇa* who considered the matter like this, "This is all the result of ostracizing Śrī Narasī dāsa from our society. An offence against a devotee cannot be neutralized even by taking bath in the Gaṅgā thousands of times."

Only when the *brāhmaṇas* came to their senses and begged forgiveness from Śrī Narasī dāsa did they become peaceful. They understood that Śrī Narasī dāsa was a genuine devotee of the Lord.

Once, Śrī Narasī dāsa went to Dvārakā to have the *darśana* of Śrī Dvārakādhīśa, and he was accompanied by his paternal uncle, Parvatalāla. Because they felt hungry on

the way, the Supreme Lord in the form of a cowherd boy approached them and invited them for lunch. Śrī Narasī dāsa accepted the invitation, considering Him to be a Vaiṣṇava, but his uncle, because of his pride of being a *brāhmaṇa*, refused.

Śrī Narasī dāsa took *prasāda* with great happiness whereas Parvatalāla remained hungry and thirsty. After a short while, the scene miraculously changed so that they no longer saw a cowherd boy or even a village. All that they saw was that they were in a dense forest. The village had been created by the will of Supreme Lord for the sake of His devotee. And yet, Śrī Narasī dāsa's uncle was bereft of the Lord's mercy.

Finally, when requested by him, Śrī Narasī dāsa gave his uncle good instructions, converting him into a genuine Vaiṣṇava. At the conclusion of his instructions, Śrī Narasī dāsa ordered his uncle to keep firm faith in the Vaiṣṇavas. Thereafter, Lord Dvārakādhiṣa bestowed His mercy upon him.

❀ Text 109 ❀

❀ Śrī Yaśodhara ❀

Unadulterated devotional service was manifest in the house of Śrī Yaśodhara, who appeared in the family of Śrī Divadāsa. All of his family members, including his wife and children, were in favor of his devotional practices. All of them were inclined towards

the Lord's service.

Śrī Yaśodhara rendered service to the Supreme Lord and His devotees. The nectarean flow of Śrī Rāmacandra's holy name would constantly emanate from his mouth. Sage Viśvāmitra once came to Ayodhyā and said to Mahārāja Daśaratha, "O King, kindly give me your two sons, Śrī Rāma and Śrī Lakṣmana, so that They can protect my performance of sacrifice."

Mahārāja Daśaratha gave his two sons and thus Rāma and Lakṣmana went to the forest with the sage. This particular pastime was very nicely described by Śrī Yaśodhara. Because of his prolific writing of songs and other literary works, his fame spread throughout the world. His descriptions of the sweet pastimes of Śrī Rāma gave great happiness to the devotees.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Once, in order to test his faith in the service of the devotees, the Lord came to Śrī Yaśodhara in the form of a devotee. Śrī Yaśodhara respectfully welcomed the Lord. The Lord in the form of a devotee said, "My dear devotee, I wish to marry your daughter."

With the permission of his wife and daughter, Śrī Yaśodhara agreed to the proposal. The Lord in the form of a devotee then said, "I want one lakh of rupees as a dowry."

Śrī Yaśodhara said, "O master, instead of one lakh of rupees, please accept the fact that I and my entire family are prepared to

engage in Your service. Please instruct me.”

Thus Śrī Yaśodhara passed the Lord's test and so He revealed Himself, awarding him His *darśana*.

Another time, Śrī Yaśodhara was returning home with some food grains and money for the service of the devotees. Finding him alone in the jungle, some dacoits wanted to plunder his wealth. Just then, Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmana, having blackish and golden complexions, appeared on the scene and drove away the dacoits by frightening them with Their bows and arrows. Later on, when they understood the truth of the matter, the dacoits gave up their profession of stealing and became devotees of the Lord after receiving instructions from Śrī Yaśodhara.

Another time, as Śrī Yaśodhara was engaged in singing about the pastimes of Śrī Rāma's going to the forest with Śrī Viśvāmitra, he cried out in ecstacy, saying, “I will also come with you.” Lord Rāmacandra personally appeared and said, “I will return very quickly after the completion of the sage's sacrifice and so please stay here.”

However, due to intense separation from Lord Śrī Rāma, Śrī Yaśodhara gave up his life.

❀ Text 110 ❀

❀ Śrī Nandadāsa ❀

The devotee poet, Śrī Nandadāsa, was constantly absorbed in love for Śrī

Kṛṣṇacandra, the crest jewel of all *rasikas* and an ocean of transcendental bliss. He was very expert in composing songs, poetry, and literature in glorification of the pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. All his statements were full of *rasa* and also very practical and reasonable. Śrī Nandadāsa was very famous for singing his songs about the various transcendental relationships in devotional service to the Lord. Although he was a resident of Rāmapura village, his fame spread throughout the world. He was born in a high class *brāhmaṇa* family and he worshiped the lotus feet of the Lord's devotees. His elder brother, Śrī Candrahāsa, was a simple-hearted and exalted soul who was dedicated to the loving service of the Supreme Lord.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Nandadāsa appeared in the house of Śrī Jīvārāma, the son of Śrī Saccidānanda, on the fifth day of the waning moon in the month of Bhādra in the year 1590 Samvat Era. He appeared in an aristocratic *brāhmaṇa* family in the village of Rāmapura in the district of Etā near Śukara Kṣetra on the shore of the Gaṅgā. His mother's name was Kamalā-devī. He studied at the school of Śrī Nṛsiṃhā, who was a devotee and learned scholar of the Vedic literatures. Then for higher education in Sanskrit, he studied at the school of Śrī Śeṣa Sanātana at Kāśī. At that time, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasī dāsa was also studying there. He considered Śrī Tulasī dāsa to be his senior godbrother. Śrī Nandadāsa compiled the

following literatures: *Rāsapañcādhyāyi*, *Siddhāntapañcādhyāyi*, *Anekārtha Mañjarī*, *Māna Mañjarī*, *Rūpa Mañjarī*, *Rasa Mañjarī*, *Viraha Mañjarī*, *Bhramara-gīta*, *Śyāma sagāi*, *Govardhana-lilā*, *Rukmiṇī Maṅgala*, *Sudāma Carita*, a commentary on the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and *Padāvalī*.

❀ Text 111 ❀

❀ Śrī Janagopāla ❀

Śrī Janagopāla was an exalted devotee whose songs were composed in a special meter so that they became famous all over the world. His forehead always shone because of his devotional service to the Supreme Lord. Śrī Janagopāla was like an ornament in the assembly of saintly persons. He had mastered the subject matter of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Indeed, his mind and intelligence were simply filled with Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. His constant practice was to recite and explain Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He was expert in refuting false arguments and removing doubts by citing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and other devotional literatures. He was a resident of Narahaḍa village and delivered many people in that province. He performed his *bhajana* in accord with the nine processes of devotional service mentioned in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He had advanced realization of this great literature. With undivided attention, he faithfully carried out his duty as a servant of the Supreme Lord and His devotees. He

cherished the desire to attain the dust from the lotus feet of the devotees and Śrī Rādhā-Nandalāla.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Janagopāla was a disciple of Śrī Harivyāsa Devācārya. Once, he took a group of devotees to a village to preach devotional service. While there, the devotees wanted to eat sweet rice and so Śrī Janagopāla asked a local devotee to bring milk. That devotee replied, “Although I have milk at home, my mother does not give it to anyone. Still, I will try.”

By the arrangement of Providence, that devotee’s mother was not at home when he went there and so he collected all the milk and used it in the service of the devotees. When his mother came home and saw that there was no milk, she went to the devotees’ place and chastised her son. However, Śrī Janagopāla politely said, “O mother, first if all, go home and see if milk is there or not and then you can chastise your son.”

When the mother went home, she saw that the milk was still there as it was before. Seeing this miracle performed in the service of the devotees, the mother and the other villagers began serving the devotees and offering them sweet rice for the few days of their stay.

❀ Text 112 ❀

❀ Śrī Mādhava Dāsa ❀

The staunch devotee, Śrī Mādhava Dāsa, preached devotional service with detachment throughout the land. His loving pastimes were very widely known. He resided at Gaḍagaḍa, where he revealed his loving sentiment towards his worshipable Lord. Once, while immersed in love for the Lord, as he was chanting the holy names of the Lord and dancing, he fell from the roof of a three story building. Lord Śyāmasundara protected his life in order to keep his vow intact.

Śrī Mādhava Dāsa's sons and grandsons also became equally powerful devotees and followed the methods of devotional service introduced by him. He had great respect and love for the devotees of the Lord. In his devotional practice, he cultivated all nine limbs of devotional service. He was never complacent in the discharge of his devotional service. Whenever he performed *kīrtana* and danced in ecstasy, he forgot his very self. His activities can only be compared to those of the exalted King Janaka of the Videha dynasty.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Mādhava Dāsa was a resident of Gaḍagaḍa and a highly advanced devotee of the Lord. Whenever he performed *saṅkīrtana*, he would forget himself and

often fall to the ground in ecstasy. The king of Gaḍagaḍa was not a devotee, but instead considered devotional practices to be just an emotional show. With this in mind, he decided to test the devotion of Śrī Mādhava Dāsa.

Once, the king organized a *saṅkīrtana* festival and invited Śrī Mādhava Dāsa. The stage for this event of chanting the holy names of Lord Hari was constructed on the roof of the king's three story building. Śrī Mādhava Dāsa wore ankle bells on his feet and began singing and dancing in ecstasy. All the assembled people clearly witnessed the influence of his loving sentiments. After awhile, Śrī Mādhava Dāsa became so intoxicated by chanting the Lord's holy names that he could not control himself and so fell. On the roof there were walls and so when he lost consciousness, he fell to the ground floor from the roof of that three story building.

On the ground just below where Śrī Mādhava Dāsa was chanting, there was a pot full of boiling ghee for preparing the feast. Śrī Mādhava Dāsa fell into that pot of boiling ghee and yet remained unharmed. Indeed, he did not feel any heat. Seeing this miracle, everyone was shocked and astonished, while the king became fearful.

After seeing this miraculous turn of events, the king had great faith and respect for the devotees of the Lord. He also became a devotee in due course of time. Such are the unique characteristics of the devotees and their loving sentiments.

❀ **Text 113** ❀❀ **Śrī Aṅgada** ❀

Lord Jagannātha fulfilled the desire of the exalted devotee, Śrī Aṅgada. He possessed an invaluable diamond which was sought after by the king and other people. Although they tried their best to steal the diamond, all of their attempts were unsuccessful. Śrī Aṅgada was very firm in his determination to not let anyone else possess the diamond.

Once, the king put him into danger in the hope of taking the diamond, but Śrī Aṅgada threw it into the water while saying, “O Lord, this diamond belongs to You and so please accept it.”

Lord Jagannātha stretched His hand from the distance of fourteen miles and accepted the diamond, placing it on His body. In this way, the Lord fulfilled the desire of His devotee.

❀ **Commentary** ❀

The king of Rāisenagaḍa was Śilāhadi Singh. His uncle, Śrī Aṅgada Singh, was a materialistic man, although his wife was a devotee of the Supreme Lord. Śrī Aṅgada Singh loved his wife dearly. She had taken a vow to render service to the Supreme Lord and His devotees throughout her entire life.

Once, the spiritual master of Śrī Aṅgada's wife came to his house. At her request, he began happily speaking about Lord Kṛṣṇa. Soon thereafter, Śrī Aṅgada arrived home.

Seeing the situation, he said to his wife's spiritual master, “Who is this sitting in my house?”

Śrī Aṅgada was very angry because a stranger was sitting in his house talking to his wife. Therefore, to chastise him, Śrī Aṅgada said, “Why are you sitting here alone with a woman? It seems that, although in the garb of a saintly person, you are attracted to women.”

When the wife's guru heard this, he immediately got up and left. Śrī Aṅgada's wife was very unhappy because of the insult to her spiritual master and so she stopped taking any food and drink.

Śrī Aṅgada was attached to worldly happiness and so he unhappy to see his wife in such a condition. He tried to pacify her in various ways, and finally he caught hold of her feet. Śrī Aṅgada's wife was lying down with her head covered. She was very unhappy and so did not like to see anyone.

Śrī Aṅgada could not tolerate this and so finally he said, “You do as you like and I will not interfere, but rather I will do whatever you say. Please uncover your face so that I can see you. I have also stopped taking any food or water because of your sadness. Please give up this moroseness so that we can both become.”

The wife said, “Do not speak to me. I will give up my life. If I had true devotion, and if my vow were genuine, then I would have entered the earth when my spiritual master was insulted.”

Finally accepting that he had committed a

great offence, Śrī Aṅgada said, “Now I will do whatever you say. At that time I had lost my intelligence and so I spoke harsh words.”

Seeing her husband’s humility, the devoted lady became compassionate so that her heart melted. She said to her husband, “Go now and fall down at the feet of my spiritual master and beg for his pardon. Please him and accept initiation from him.”

Thereafter, Śrī Aṅgada went to the spiritual master and with faith and devotion brought him to his house. He was now very humble and submissive to his spiritual master. Finally, he became his disciple, and according to the principles of *vaiṣṇava-dharma*, he wore a *tulasī kañthī-mālā* given by his spiritual master and decorated his forehead with *tilaka*. Śrī Aṅgada fed his spiritual master and took the remnants of his food. A new loving relationship with the Supreme Lord, the devotees of the Lord, his spiritual master sprouted within the heart of Śrī Aṅgada.

Once, by the order of his nephew, Śilāhadī Singh, he declared war against his king. He was the commander-in-chief of the army. With his many soldiers he killed all those who opposed him and finally achieved victory. While plundering the royal treasury, he took possession of the king’s crown, which was decorated with one hundred precious jewels. Of those jewels one was the most valuable.

Śrī Aṅgada sold ninety-nine jewels from the crown and used the money in the service of the devotees. He saved only the most valuable jewel, keeping it in his turban. He

wanted to donate this most valuable jewel to Lord Jagannātha.

Meanwhile, King Śilāhadī Singh heard from various sources about that precious jewel. He declared, “If my uncle gives that diamond to me then I will forgive him for stealing the other ninety-nine jewels.”

People came and explained this to Śrī Aṅgada. They put forth much reasoning and arguments but Śrī Aṅgada did not pay attention to them. The people then went and complained to the king.

Śrī Aṅgada had a sister who was therefore the king’s aunt. She used to cook for Śrī Aṅgada. The king touched her feet and diplomatically said, “Please administer poison to Śrī Aṅgada and kill him. I will reward you with a great deal of wealth and land.”

She agreed to carry out the king’s plan and so she mixed poison with the food she cooked, offered it to the Lord, and then served it to Śrī Aṅgada.

Śrī Aṅgada’s sister had a daughter. Whenever Śrī Aṅgada would sit down to have his meal, he would invite her to eat with him. But on that particular day, in order to save her daughter, Śrī Aṅgada’s sister hid her daughter into someone’s house. However, Śrī Aṅgada was not willing to eat without her. Finally his sister said, “Please begin eating. The girl might have gone somewhere to play.”

Although she tried giving such excuses, Śrī Aṅgada did not eat without the girl. Seeing his brother’s great love and affection for

her daughter, she felt remorse for her sinful plan and finally began crying. Indeed, she disclosed everything to her brother while profusely crying. After hearing this terrible news, Śrī Aṅgada said, "How could you dare offer poisoned food to the Supreme Lord? And how is it that you are now begging me to not accept the remnants of food taken by the Lord?"

After saying this, Śrī Aṅgada pushed his sister out of the room. Accepting the will of the Lord as supreme, he closed the door and had his meal. To everyone's surprise, the poison had no effect on Śrī Aṅgada, and because he had honored the Lord's *prasāda*, his face became bright. His only distress was that the Lord had been offered food mixed with poison.

The king came to hear of this incident. After some careful consideration, Śrī Aṅgada left for Śrī Jagannātha Purī so that he could offer the diamond to the Lord. When the king received this news, he quickly sent his soldiers, who then surrounded Śrī Aṅgada. The commander of the army said to Śrī Aṅgada, "Surrender the diamond to us, unless you wish to fight with us. We are duty bound to bring the diamond back to our king. Without the diamond, we cannot let you go. We have come here by the order of the king."

Śrī Aṅgada said, "Just wait for a while. I will go and have my bath in this *kunḍa* and then give you the diamond."

Śrī Aṅgada had great love and devotion for the Supreme Lord. Therefore, instead

of giving the diamond to the king's soldiers, he threw it into the water while praying, "O my Lord, this is your property and so kindly accept it."

These loving words of the devotee were very pleasing to Lord Jagannātha. Although situated in Jagannātha Purī, the Lord stretched His arms and accepted the diamond from a distance of fourteen hundred miles. Lord Jagannātha then placed the diamond on His chest.

After throwing the diamond in the water, Śrī Aṅgada returned home in a despondant mood while the soldiers jumped into the water and searched for the diamond. Even after trying very hard, they could not find the diamond and so they became anxious.

The king then came there and, after draining the pond of all its water, looked in the mire for the diamond. However, he was disappointed because even with such endeavor, he could not find the diamond.

On the other side of the country, Lord Jagannātha ordered His *pāṇḍās* "Go and tell Aṅgada Singh that I have received his diamond and am wearing it."

The *pāṇḍās* went to Śrī Aṅgada Singh and gave him this wonderful news. Śrī Aṅgada was so overjoyed that he forgot about his very self. Later on, Śrī Aṅgada went to Purī and saw that the diamond was shining beautifully on Lord Jagannātha's chest. Who can describe the happiness Śrī Aṅgada experienced by seeing the beauty of the Lord?

Seeing this wonderful prowess of Śrī

Āṅgada's devotional position, the king felt aggrieved at heart—so much so that he stopped eating and drinking. Being afraid of having committed an offence against a devotee, he summoned the *brāhmaṇas* and sent them to Śrī Jagannātha Purī to bring Śrī Āṅgada. The king ordered, "Somehow or other bring him here. If he comes and stays in our town, I will consider myself to be very fortunate."

The *brāhmaṇas* thus went to Purī and described to Śrī Āṅgada the distress of the king and appealed to him, saying, "Kindly come with us and remain in our city."

But when Śrī Āṅgada said that he was not at all prepared to return, the *brāhmaṇas* sat down as if to fast until death. Finally, Śrī Āṅgada became merciful. Just to remove the king's distress, he made up his mind to go. When Śrī Āṅgada almost reached his destination, the king heard the news of his impending arrival and so quickly came out of the city and fell down at his feet. Śrī Āṅgada picked him up and embraced him with affection, their eyes filled with tears.

The king surrendered everything at the feet of Śrī Āṅgada. In this way, having received a new life, the king passed his time engaged in the devotional service of the Lord. Indeed, his heart was now filled with feelings of devotional ecstasy. According to Śrī Priyādāsa, Śrī Āṅgada's good qualities were without limit and so he has described whatever he knew.

❀ Text 114 ❀

❀ Śrī Caturbhuja ❀

Who is the king who can compete with the service to saintly persons rendered by Śrī Caturbhuja? Śrī Caturbhuja was the king of Karaulī. He has such firm faith and devotion for the devotees that whenever he heard that a devotee was coming, he would go as far as eight miles to greet him and bring him home. He would respectfully bring the devotee to his palace and serve him with love and devotion. Śrī Caturbhuja, along with his queen, personally washed the devotee's feet and then took the *caraṇāmṛta*. He would then worship the devotee with various articles, including sandalwood paste, flowers garlands, incense, a ghee lamp, and foodstuffs. Thereafter, he would seat the devotee on his throne while singing and dancing before him. It was king's practice to offer his body, mind, and wealth in the service of the devotees. There is no other devotee king who can be compared to Śrī Caturbhuja.

❀ Commentary ❀

The king of Karaulī, Śrī Caturbhuja, established four outposts on the four sides of his city and he employed royal officials in those places with the order that if a devotee would come, he should be respectfully welcomed and served. It was the duty of those officials that they should immediately inform the king about any devotee's arrival.

Whenever the king received information that a devotee had arrived, he would immediately go and personally escort him to his palace. He would serve the devotees by considering himself their humble servant. If anyone whose forehead was decorated with *tilaka* and his neck adorned with *tulasi* beads came to his palace, the king would treat him like a genuine devotee and serve him very respectfully.

There was a king who heard about Śrī Caturbhuja's devotional practices and the fact that whenever he would see a person with *tilaka* and *kañṭhī-mālā*, he would run to that person and serve him in every way. That king did not respect Śrī Caturbhuja's behavior and liberal nature, for he did not consider whether one was a fit candidate for charity or not. The king therefore concluded that his service and charity were not praiseworthy. Thus he minimized the glory of Śrī Caturbhuja.

A devoted *brāhmaṇa* lived in the royal court of this king who was criticizing Śrī Caturbhuja. His duty was to recite Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. When the king criticized Śrī Caturbhuja, this *brāhmaṇa* said, "O King, please do not speak like this about the king of Karaulī. Do not say that he does not discriminate between proper and improper candidates for charity and therefore his charity is useless. Who can enter the heart of a devotee and know his intentions?"

When the *brāhmaṇa* strongly spoke like this, the king considered that it is not good to criticize anyone without first testing him.

Therefore, in order to test Śrī Caturbhuja, he sent a servant to his palace. He ordered the servant to decorate himself with neckbeads and *tilaka* and dress like a devotee. When the servant approached the king of Karaulī, he neglected to present himself as a devotee of Lord. Thinking that the king would reward him, the servant glorified his qualities and dynasty. All the assembled people considered this servant to be a śūdra and dealt with him accordingly. They would not even allow him to enter the palace.

In this way, the servant resided at Karaulī for about a month. Finally, one day, he remembered the instructions of his king about how he had been sent to test Śrī Caturbhuja by dressing himself as a saintly person and so he decorated himself with neckbeads and *tilaka* and went to the royal court. Arriving there, he said to the gatekeeper, "Go inside and tell the king that a devotee has come."

The gatekeeper politely said, "O great soul, you have nothing to fear. You can go inside the royal palace and sing the glories of Lord Govinda. There is no restriction for a person like you."

Thus the servant went inside the palace. Śrī Caturbhuja saw him dressed as a devotee and so he respectfully greeted him and served him. But when the king began to discuss subjects pertaining to devotional service, he could understand that his guest had not a tinge of devotion for the Lord. The King thought, "He has simply come here to test me at someone's instigation."

As he was accustomed, the king opened his treasury and asked the servant to take as much wealth as he desired. The servant took much wealth, including gold and silver, placing it in his bag. As he was leaving, the king also donated to him a small box decorated with beautiful cloth and jewels.

The imitation devotee returned to Karauli and approached the king. He described everything in detail and showed him the wealth that he had brought. Finally, he gave the small box to the king. With great excitement, the king opened the small box and found a single useless coin inside. Although the king thought about this again and again, he could not understand why Śrī Caturbhuja had sent a useless coin wrapped in a silk cloth and kept in a jewel-studded box.

The learned scholar who recited Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam at the royal palace was very intelligent and wise. He remained merged in love of God throughout the entire day and night. The king of Karauli thought that since the learned *brāhmaṇa* was a devotee, he could understand the mood of another devotee. Therefore, at night, the king approached the learned *brāhmaṇa* and inquired from him about the mystery of sending a useless coin.

The learned scholar thought for awhile and then said, "I will disclose to you the intention of the devotee king, Śrī Caturbhuja. He considers the dress and markings of a devotee to be worthy of respect, but a person's motive of testing someone is as useless as that coin. Śrī Caturbhuja had ignored the motive of

your servant but had respected his dress as a devotee."

Hearing this explanation from the learned *brāhmaṇa*, the king fell down at his feet and requested him to personally go to Karauli and find out the real identity and glories of Śrī Caturbhuja. Thus the scholar went to Karauli. When Śrī Caturbhuja heard of his arrival, he went and fell down at his feet with great respect. He brought him into the royal palace and served him. The two discussed devotional subjects and became immersed in love of God.

The learned *brāhmaṇa* wanted to return home but the king always requested him to stay a bit longer. Finally, when the scholar left Karauli, Śrī Caturbhuja felt great distress due to feelings of impending separation. The king opened his treasury and asked the learned *brāhmaṇa* to take as much wealth as he liked, but the scholar did not take anything. Instead, he said, "I am impressed by your love and affection. This wealth has no value in comparison to your devotional mood and behavior."

Śrī Caturbhuja said, "O Mahārāja, kindly accept something so that I will feel happy."

The learned scholar said, "I see a green parrot and a black bird in your palace. Please give one of those birds to me."

Although the king was attached to the birds, he ultimately gave the black bird to the learned scholar. The scholar was as happy as if he had received the treasury of Kuvera.

The scholar left Karauli and returned to the king's court, taking with him the

black bird. In the royal assembly, all types of people would constantly be coming and going. Thus, when the scholar arrived, people were busy discussing various topics.

When the black bird heard their worldly discussions, she chastised them, saying, “O clay dolls, chant Kṛṣṇa, chant Kṛṣṇa!”

The king requested the scholar, “O Mahārāja, kindly tell me about the devotional mood of Śrī Caturbhuja.”

The scholar replied, “O King, you can understand his glories from the mouth of this black bird. What to speak of the king, even a small bird of that kingdom is devoted to the Supreme Lord. Even if I were to describe Śrī Caturbhuja’s glories with thousands of tongues, I would not be able to reach the limit.”

After hearing the glories of Śrī Caturbhuja’s devotional service, the king went to him and fell down at his lotus feet to offer obeisances. He then returned the black bird and said, “O King of devotees, keep this black bird in your palace. Lord Kṛṣṇa is present in her mind and body. Your devotional mood and your service attitude towards Supreme Lord and the devotees are most glorious.”

The king spent some time with the King of Karaulī and then returned to his own palace after receiving some good instructions and having some good association.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Once, to take advantage of Śrī Caturbhuja’s service attitude towards the devotees, a

dacoit dressed himself like a devotee and began residing in his palace. One night, when the king was not present, the so-called devotee took the opportunity to steal an expensive necklace of the queen. He secretly went to the queen’s quarters and tried to cut off the queen’s head with a knife. However, the queen’s throat became like a thunderbolt and so the knife melted like candle wax when it touched it. When the queen woke up, the dacoit trembled in fear. He fell down at the feet of the queen and begged for her pardon. The queen said, “Even an experienced person can make a mistake.”

Seeing the queen’s forgiveness and liberal nature, the dacoit gave up his sinful profession and became a devotee of the Lord.

❀ Text 115 ❀

❀ Śrī Mirā ❀

In this formidable age of Kali, the devoted Śrī Mīrābāi manifested the same love for Kṛṣṇa as that which was possessed by the *gopīs*. She sang the transcendental glories of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, the crest jewels of all those who possess devotional sentiments, without any fear. Sinful persons considered her devotional mood and practice to be improper and thus they tried to kill her in various ways. She was

administered poison, but she drank it as if it were nectar. By the mercy of the Lord, she was not the least harmed. She always came out victorious because of the strength of her devotional service. She disregarded shyness, mundane morality, family prestige, and other obstacles, and engaged in the worship of her beloved Lord Śrī Giridhara Gopāla.

❀ Commentary ❀

The birthplace of Śrī Mīrābāi was the city of Merta, near Jodhpur. When she was a child and lived in her father's house, she became attracted to Lord Śrī Giridhārīlāl. She had a natural attachment for the Supreme Lord. Later on, she was engaged to Śrī Bhojarāja, the son of Rānā Sānga of Chittor. At the time of her marriage, her father gave many beautiful and expensive gifts but Śrī Mīrābāi's mind was absorbed in loving sentiments for Lord Śyāmasundara. Even when she was reciting the oath of marriage with Śrī Bhojarāja, her mind was fixed on the blackish cowherd boy, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

After marriage, when Śrī Mīrābāi was leaving for her in-laws' house, she almost fainted due to love of God. However, seeing her condition, her father pacified her by saying, "Do not feel sad. Whatever cloth and ornaments you like, you can take with you."

Śrī Mīrābāi's eyes were filled with tears as she replied, "What will I do with all this wealth?"

Śrī Mīrābāi told her parents, "If you want to make me happy by giving me my object of desire then kindly give me the Deity of

Śrī Giridhārīlāla. You can keep all the other gifts and wealth."

Śrī Mīrābāi was very dear to her parents and her mother could understand that she had deep love and affection for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She embraced Śrī Mīrābāi and said, "Take Śrī Giridhārīlāla with you and serve Him very nicely."

Śrī Mīrābāi sat in the palanquin, keeping her beloved Lord Śrī Giridhārīlāla in front of her. She was exceedingly happy to be blessed by the family Deity. In this way, she reached the house of her husband, Rānā Bhojarāja. Her mother-in-law affectionately welcomed her and took her to the temple of goddess Durgā, where she arranged for appropriate worship. First of all she had the groom worship the goddess and then she said to Śrī Mīrābāi, "My dear daughter-in-law, you should now worship goddess Durgā."

Śrī Mīrābāi said, "My head has already been sold to Śrī Giridhārīlāla and so it cannot bend to any other demigod or goddess. My only desire in this life is to see and offer obeisances to my worshipable Lord."

The mother-in-law said, "Goddess Durgā is our family deity. By worshiping her, a woman becomes fortunate. Therefore you should not disregard the goddess, for if you do so, she will become angry. Offer your obeisances to Devī by touching your head to her feet."

Although Śrī Mīrābāi's mother-in-law repeatedly insisted that she worship the goddess, Śrī Mīrābāi simply said, "Know for

certain that this is my vow. I have sacrificed everything at the lotus feet of the most enchanting Supreme Lord, Śyāmasundara and so now I cannot worship or offer obeisances to anyone else.”

After hearing this strong reply, the mother-in-law became angry so that her mind became restless like boiling water. She went to her husband and said, “This daughter-in-law will be of no use to me. She does not obey me, but rather insults me to my face. You can just imagine what she will do to me in the future.”

Saying this, the mother-in-law breathed heavily like a blacksmith’s bellows. The Rāṇā became furious after hearing these words and he decided to kill his daughter-in-law. He allotted an old and isolated house for Śrī Mīrābāi to stay in. And yet, Śrī Mīrābāi became very happy to have a secluded place of residence. She stayed alone in that house and throughout the entire day and night she engaged in worshiping, serving, and glorifying her Lord Śrī Girīdhārālāla.

One who possesses intense eagerness to meet the Supreme Lord always likes to associate with saintly persons. Śrī Mīrābāi thus associated with likeminded devotees. One day, after seeing Śrī Mīrābāi associating with saintly persons, her husband’s sister, Udābāi, came to her and said, “What do you think of yourself? It is not at all proper for a woman to associate with saintly persons. This kind of behavior will bring disrepute to the entire family. Rāṇājī is the king of the country. Because of your independent

behavior, he often feels ashamed in public. You are also ruining the traditions of your father’s family. Therefore you accept my words and immediately stop associating with saintly persons.”

In reply, Śrī Mīrābāi said, “I always like to associate with saintly persons. Indeed, I enjoy great happiness in their association. Anyone who is unhappy because of my behavior should simply stay away from me.”

After hearing about these words of Śrī Mīrābāi, Rāṇā sent a bowl of poison with Dayārāma Paṇḍā and asked her to drink it, claiming it to be *caraṇāmṛta* of the Supreme Lord. Without hesitation, Śrī Mīrābāi drank the poison, considering it to be *caraṇāmṛta*. After drinking it, a mystical effulgence emanated from her body. Meanwhile, devotees in Dvārakā saw foam coming from the Deity of Śrī Raṇachoḍa.

Although Śrī Mīrābāi gladly drank the poison sent by Rāṇā, she was unable to bear separation from the association of devotees. When she did not die even after drinking the poison and did not give up the association of devotees then Rāṇā employed spies to plot against her. Rāṇājī ordered them, “Whenever a devotee comes and sits with Mīrā, immediately inform me. I will then come and kill her. This is my final decision.”

Śrī Mīrābāi continuously associated with her worshipable Lord, Śrī Girīdhārālāla. She would talk, laugh, and play with a ball with her Lord. One day, the spies heard sounds of conversation in Śrī Mīrābāi’s room and so they immediately went and informed

Rāṇājī. Having become extremely angry and restless, he picked up his sword and quickly ran to Śrī Mīrābāi's palace, where he shouted, "Open the door!"

Śrī Mīrābāi opened the door but Rāṇājī did not find anyone else inside her room. She was all alone. Rāṇājī chastised her, saying, "Where is the man with whom you were having a loving affair with bysmiling and talking? Tell me immediately."

Śrī Mīrābāi gestured towards her beloved Deity and said, "That person is the Lord of my life and the Supreme Lord of all existence. He is standing before you. He is not shy and so you can open your eyes and see Him. Just see how nicely He has decorated Himself."

This talk made Rāṇājī even angrier so that he became completely confused about what he should do. He stood there motionless like a picture hanging on the wall. After awhile, Rāṇājī saw the form of Lord Nṛsiṃha and so quickly departed. He believed that it might be possible that the Lord was enjoying pastimes with Mīrā.

It is said that even after experiencing the Lord's glories and mercy, godless people cannot give up their atheistic tendencies. Thus there was no change in the heart of Rāṇājī. Without the mercy of the Lord's devotees, no one can achieve the shelter of the Supreme Lord.

Once, a low-class lusty person dressed himself like a devotee, approached Śrī Mīrābāi and said, "Your Lord Śrī Girīdhārīlāla has ordered me to have union with you. It is for this that I have come to

you."

After hearing these shamelessly words, Śrī Mīrābāi replied, "I accept the order of my worshipable Lord but first you must have your meal at my house. Then your desire will be fulfilled."

Śrī Mīrābāi fed that person and then arranged a bed in the midst of many other devotees. She summoned that low-class, lusty person and said, "You can now do whatever the Lord has ordered you to do."

That lusty person felt embarrassed and so simply stood there confounded. Śrī Mīrābāi said, "Why are you afraid? Why do you feel shy? Enjoy my association without fear."

Hearing this, the face of that lusty person became pale. By the influence of Śrī Mīrābāi's devotion, all his sinful desires had been dispelled. He then fell down at the feet of Śrī Mīrābāi and begged for her pardon. He also requested Śrī Mīrābāi to bless him with engagement in the devotional service of the Lord.

Once, after hearing praises of Śrī Mīrābāi's beauty and behavior, King Akbar became attracted to her. With a desire to have Śrī Mīrābāi's *darśana*, he took Tānasena with him and went to see her. Seeing the beautiful Deity of Śrī Girīdhārāgopāla and the spontaneous devotion of Śrī Mīrābāi, the emperor was astonished. At that time Tānasena sang a beautiful song and the king offered a jeweled necklace at the lotus feet of the Deity.

Later on, Śrī Mīrābāi went to Śrī Vṛndāvana and met Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī. She

was very happy to have his association. Indeed, Śrī Mīrābāi found a new life in the abode of Vṛndāvana because the whole area was saturated with glorification of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava. Śrī Mīrābāi had the *darśana* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. Then she placed Their Lordships within her heart and returned to her own country. There, she composed many songs about Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in the groves of Vṛndāvana and sang them melodiously.

Understanding that Rāṇājī was extremely unfavorable toward her, Śrī Mīrābāi went to Dvārakā and took up residence there. She resided at Dvārakā and rendered devotional service to Śrī Girīdhara Gopāla.

Finally, when Rāṇājī realized her actual position, he became very sorry and began to lament. He wanted to see Śrī Mīrābāi and so he sent many *brāhmaṇas* to Dvārakā, asking them to somehow or other bring her back home. The *brāhmaṇas* went to Dvārakā and informed Śrī Mīrābāi of Rāṇājī's request, but she had no inclination to leave Dvārakā. Feeling despondent because of their failure, the *brāhmaṇas* stopped eating and drinking and simply sat at the doorsteps of Śrī Mīrābāi's residence.

Finally, Śrī Mīrābāi said to them, "Alright, I will take permission from Śrī Raṇachoḍalāla to depart."

After saying this, she entered the Deity room and prayed, "O my Lord, I am a fallen, wretched person. You are supremely independent and so You can either keep me at Your lotus feet or push me away. You can

do whatever You wish."

Singing these lines and dancing in ecstasy, Śrī Mīrābāi merged within the body of Śrī Raṇachoḍalāla. After that, no one saw her anywhere.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Raidāsa was Śrī Mīrābāi's spiritual master. In her songs, Śrī Mīrābāi referred to her spiritual master as Śrī Raidāsa. Śrī Mīrābāi did not have any worldly relationship with her husband. Once, after her marriage, her husband, Bhojarāja, wanted to see her dance, being impressed by her appearance and behavior. To this, Śrī Mīrābāi said, "My dance will cost you dearly."

Bhojarāja replied, "I will give you whatever you demand."

Śrī Mīrābāi said, "Please offer my mind, words, and activities at the lotus feet of Śrī Girīdhara Gopāla as a sacrifice. For worldly happiness, marry another princess."

Upon hearing this, Bhojarāja fainted and fell to the ground. Just then, his sister, Udābāi came there and screamed, "This witch has killed my brother."

After a few moments, Bhojarāja came to his senses and said, "No one should cause any distress to Śrī Mīrābāi, for there is no fault in her." After saying this, Bhojarāja left his body. The local people advised Śrī Mīrābāi to enter the funeral pyre of her husband. However, Śrī Mīrābāijī said to them, "My real husband is Girīdhara Gopāla, and He is eternally present."

King Bhojarāja was the eldest son of Mahārāṇa Sāṅgā. After the death of Bhojarāja, Mahārāṇa Sāṅgā also died. Then his second son, Ratna Singh, became the king of Cittora. During his rule, Śrī Mīrābāi experienced no difficulties in the practice of her devotional activities but after about four or five years, Ratna Singh also died at an early age. After him, his stepbrother, Vikrama Singh, became the king. During his reign, Śrī Mīrābāi had to face many difficulties. The word Rāṇā used in this text refers to Vikrama Singh.

❀ **Text 116** ❀

❀ **Śrī Pṛthvīrāja** ❀

By the instructions of Payohārī Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa, the *kṣatriya* king, Śrī Pṛthvīrāja, a descendant of Kurmavaṁśī (Kacchavāḥ) of Āmera, realized the Absolute Truth. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa correctly described the identity of the Supreme Lord and thereby removed the darkness of ignorance from the heart of the king. Śrī Pṛthvīrāja was self-controlled, like Grandfather Bhīma, the son of Gaṅgā, and truthful like Dharmarāja Yudhīṣṭhira. His faith in the worship of the Supreme Lord was like that of Prahlāda. He hoisted the flag of the Vaiṣṇava religion and remained aloof from material contamination. Śrī Pṛthvīrāja was a topmost devotee of the Lord. His devotion to the Lord and to his spiritual master was known to everyone.

Once, although he was staying at Āmera fort, he received the *darśana* of Lord Śrī Dvārakādhīśa, and his body became decorated with the marks of a conch shell, *cakra*, and so on.

❀ **Commentary** ❀

Once, Śrī Pṛthvīrāja, the King of Āmera, prepared to go to the Dvārakā, along with his spiritual master, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Mahārāja. He was very happy to have the association of his spiritual master, and he had an ardent desire to have the *darśana* of Śrī Dvārakādhīśa. However, when the king's minister heard about this, he became very unhappy.

At night the minister approached Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa and softly said, “O Mahārāja, at present, Śrī Pṛthvīrāja is engaged in the service of saintly persons with his body, mind, and wealth. Because these devotees are constantly coming and going, the whole population of Āmera has become aware of the importance of devotional service to the Lord. If the king leaves the city, it will be an obstacle for the service of saintly persons and the preaching of devotional service. Kindly carefully consider this matter and then do as you please. I think that you should not take the king to Dvārakā at this time.”

Śrī Payāhārī Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa said, “You may go now. I will not take the king with me.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa did not tell the king what the minister had said to him. Early the next morning, Śrī Pṛthvīrāja approached Śrī Svāmījī with folded hands and waited for his instructions. Śrī Svāmījī said, “There is no

need for you to come with me to Dvārakā. Stay here and render service to the devotees.”

However, Śrī Pṛthvīrāja did not at all like this. He said to Śrī Payahārī, “I have a strong desire to go to Dvārakā and have the *darśana* of Śrī Dvārakādhīśa, to take bath at Śrī Gomatī Saṅgama, and to decorate my arms with the symbols of the conch shell and *cakra*. Therefore, kindly allow me to accompany you.”

Śrī Svāmījī said, “O King, do not worry about this. You will have all your desires fulfilled even by staying here. All three of your desires will surely be fulfilled.”

The King said, “I will follow your order and stay at Āmera.”

Saying this, the king offered his obsequies to his spiritual master, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa. When his spiritual master left the city, Śrī Pṛthvīrāja escorted him for some distance as tears of devotion filled his eyes. He felt impending separation from his divine spiritual master and his instructions. Finally, the king returned to his palace after his spiritual master had pacified him in various ways. Feeling separation from his spiritual master, the king merged his mind into the vast ocean of devotional service.

After three days, as the king was sleeping at night, the Lord of Dvārakā appeared before him. The Lord was aware of the assurances of Payahārī Kṛṣṇadāsa and so in order to make his words prove true, He sweetly spoke to the king in the voice of his spiritual master.

The Lord called, “O Pṛthvīrāja!”

The king immediately woke up. Sitting up, he saw his worshipable Lord and so fell down to the floor like a rod to offer his respectful obsequies. He then stood up and performed *parikramā* of the Lord.

The Supreme Lord said, “Please hear Me with attention. Here is Gomatī Saṅgama and so you should bathe in it.”

The king joyfully took his bath. He dove into the water of the river and took a holy bath, but when he came out of the water, he could not see the Lord. The king then saw the markings of a conch shell and *cakra* imprinted on his body.

Meanwhile, the queen, understanding that the king was late in getting up, came to him and woke him up. She saw that his entire body was drenched. When she asked why he was all wet, the king said, “Just now I took a holy bath in the Gomatī River. You should touch my body and clothing so that you will have the touch of Gomatī’s water. And you should place Śrī Dvārakānātha within your heart.”

The queen followed her husband’s instructions and considered herself to be very fortunate. The next morning, news of this miracle spread not only throughout the city of Āmera but also throughout the entire kingdom. Many people came and to have the *darśana* of the king so that there was a huge crowd outside the Āmera fort.

Hearing this news, devotees from faraway places came there and became very pleased to see the permanent markings of a *śaṅkha* and *cakra* on the body of the king. People

offered varieties of gifts to him and they praised the king's love and devotion for the Supreme Lord. And yet, the king felt shy to hear such praises because he considered his good fortune to be simply the mercy of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

People could also understand that the king had been blessed by the mercy of his spiritual master and the Supreme Lord. After this incident, the king constructed a large, beautiful temple for the Lord at that place where he had had His *darśana*. Śrī Pṛthvīrāja continuously engaged in the worship and service of the Supreme Lord. For this reason, the whole world sings of his glories and activities. Śrī Priyādāsa says that he enjoyed narrating the life of Śrī Pṛthvīrāja very much.

Once, a blind *brāhmaṇa* went to a temple of Vaidyanātha and sat down there with a vow to regain his eyesight. He sat and lay at the door of Śrī Vaidyanātha's temple for about three months. Śrī Mahādeva appeared to him twice in a dream and told him that he should return home because it was not possible to get back his eyesight in this life. But still, the *brāhmaṇa* was very stubborn and fixed in his vow and so he remained seated at Vaidyanātha's doorstep.

Finally, seeing his firm determination, Śrī Mahādeva became compassionate and ordered him, saying, "Wipe your eyes with the towel of Śrī Pṛthvīrāja. By doing so, you will regain your eyesight."

The blind *brāhmaṇa* came back to Āmera and narrated this incident to the king,

Śrī Pṛthvīrāja. However, considering the elevated position of a *brāhmaṇa*, the king became frightened and said, "This is not a proper thing to do."

Still, in consideration of the eagerness of the *brāhmaṇa* and the request of the people, the king brought a new towel, touched it to his body, and gave it to him. As soon as the *brāhmaṇa* touched the towel to his eyes, he regained his vision and so he was exceedingly happy. In this way, all the people directly witnessed the glorious position of devotional service, and as a result, their hearts melted in ecstatic love for the Lord.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Pṛthvīrāja belonged to the Sūrya dynasty, and was a descendant of Lord Rāmacandra. He was the eldest son of Śrī Candrasena, the King of Āmera. His mother was Bhāgavatī-devī Cauhāna. He became the king of Āmera in the year 1559 Samvat Era. First he was a disciple of Caturānātha, or Tāranātha, of the Nātha *sampradāya*. His eldest queen was Bālābāi (Apūrva-devī), the daughter of Lunakaraṇa Rao of Bikanera. He was married in the year 1564 Samvat Era. He had six queens and nineteen children.

Śrī Pṛthvīrāja's queen, Bālābāi, took initiation from Śrī Payahārī even before her marriage. Because of the queen's request, Śrī Payahārī went to Āmera. By her service, words, and behavior, she conquered Śrī Payahārī's heart. Being pleased by her service, Śrī Payahārī awarded her a Nṛsimha śāligrāma-śilā which he personally worshiped

and said, “As long as Lord Nṛsimha remains in your house, you will have the kingdom firmly in your grip.”

Thus even when the Mohameddians and British ruled, the kingdom remained safe and secure. Once, out of greed, someone stole the Deity of Lord Nṛsimha. Later on, the Lord was found and brought back and again installed in the temple. But because the Lord was taken out of his residence, Śrī Pṛthvīrāja lost control of his kingdom. Once, one of the ministers plundered the king’s treasury under some pretext. And yet, Śrī Pṛthvīrāja was so merciful that he forgave the minister. Seeing his exalted qualities, the minister returned all the wealth and began engaging in the devotional service of the Lord.

Once, Śrī Pṛthvīrāja left his queen, Bālābāi, at home and went to Badrikāśram to have the *darśāna* of Śrī Nara-nārāyaṇa. And yet, by the strength of her spiritual master’s mercy, Bālābāi reached Badrikāśram ahead of the king so that when he arrived, she was standing in front of him, having *darśāna* of the Lord. The king was standing behind the queen and so his *darśāna* was obstructed. The king mildly said to unknown lady, “O Bāijī, kindly move a little so that I can have the *darśāna* of the Lord.”

When that lady moved a little, the king saw that she was his queen, but at the same time he knew that he had left her at home. Thinking that he must be mistaken, the king turned his gaze away from the queen and towards the Supreme Lord. Later on, when the king returned home, the queen asked

him, “O Mahārāja, since you had addressed me as Bāijī (a daughter or sister) in front of the Supreme Lord, kindly treat me in that way from now on.”

From that time onwards, both Śrī Pṛthvīrāja and his devoted wife, Bālābāi, simply engaged in performing *bhajana* of the Supreme Lord. They arranged for *satsaṅga* in their palace on a daily basis. Even today, one can see the Śālagrāma of Lord Śrī Nṛsimha in the Āmera fort at Jodhpur. People go there and pray to this Deity and have their wishes fulfilled.

Text 117

These saintly kings rendered great service to the Lord’s devotees. Because of Śrī Jayamala’s service to saintly persons and his arranging huge gatherings of devotees, his capital, Meḍatā, appeared like a second Mathurā City. There lived a devoted king named Śrī Rāmacandra in the village of Ṭoṇḍā. He satisfied the devotees of the Lord by his sincere service. Another king, Śrī Abhayarāma, engaged in the service of the devotees throughout his entire life. Similarly, Śrī Nimbā took a great vow to serve saintly persons. Śrī Karamaśīla, Śrī Suratāna, Śrī Bhagavāna, and Śrī Virama were all very much fixed in the service of the devotees. Śrī Īśvara, Śrī Akṣararāja, Śrī Rāimāla, Śrī Kanhara, and Śrī Madhukara—all these saintly kings offered everything in the service of the devotees.

Commentary

Śrī Jayamala

Śrī Jayamala resided at Meḍatā in Jodhpur. He was fully aware of the potency of Bhakti-devī. His glories have previously been discussed. His loving service to saintly persons greatly enhanced his devotion to the Supreme Lord.

Now I will tell more about about Śrī Jayamala and so please hear me with attention. From this narration you will understand how much love and affection he had for his Deity. The Deity's temple was located on the ground floor of his residence and so later on, he constructed a beautiful, airy room for the Lord on the roof of his building. In that room he painted many pictures depicting the Lord's pastimes and abode. He furnished the room with a soft bed, bed cover, pillows, blankets, beautiful silk cloths, a golden spittoon, and a golden container for keeping *pān*. He also kept a *cāmara* and peacock fans, as well as many other valuable articles. He hung beautiful, embroidered curtains on all the windows and doors.

Śrī Jayamala constructed a ladder so that the Deity could be taken from the ground floor temple to the rooftop bedroom. He would climb the ladder to go to the roof to decorate the Lord's bed with flowers. He would come down by the same ladder and then remove it and keep it somewhere so

that no one would know what he was doing. He would sit outside the Lord's bedroom and guard the door. Because his actions were simply based on love, his heart and consciousness became pure.

Śrī Jayamala would meditate on how the Lord is lying on His bed, how He is chewing *pān*, how He is spitting in the spittoon, and so on. His distinct mode of service to the Lord was unknown even to his queen.

Once, at night, the queen put up the ladder, climbed to the roof, moved the curtain a little, and looked inside. To her astonishment, she saw a beautiful young boy lying on the bed. Being afraid of the king and also afraid that the Lord would be disturbed, she quietly climbed down the ladder and returned to her quarters after keeping the ladder in its place.

In the morning, the queen described everything to her husband and said, "Now all my desires have been fulfilled."

Śrī Jayamala chastised his queen and told her not to do this again, but he was actually very pleased that the queen was fortunate to have the *darśana* of the Lord.

Additional Commentary

Raodudā, the King of Mārawar, had three sons, namely Rāimala, Virama, and Ratna Singh. Ratna Singh's daughter was Mīrabāī, and Virama's son was Jaimala. Thus Śrī Jaimala was the brother of Mīrabāī. Śrī Jaimala's liberal nature and service attitude towards the Vaiṣṇavas have been described in several books.

Once, a group of devotees came and stayed with him. At that time, the spiritual master of one of the devotees came to a nearby village. Since that devotee was disabled and could not walk, he borrowed a horse from Śrī Jaimala and went to meet his spiritual master. When the spiritual master saw the nice horse, he wanted to keep it. The disciple understood the spiritual master's intention and so he gave him the horse. When the disciple returned, he explained everything to Śrī Jaimala, who then said, "Whatever I have in my possession belongs to the devotees. If you need more horses, you can take them from me."

Seeing his service attitude, all the assembled devotees became pleased and praised his devotional mood.

Śrī Rāmacandra

Śrī Rāmacandra was a son of Śrī Pṛthvīrāja. He belonged to the Solāṅkī *kṣatriya* caste and hailed from Ṭoṇḍā village in Rājasthāna. After the death of his father, he became the ruler of Ṭoṇḍā province. He ruled his kingdom from 1581 to 1612 Samvat Era. He had two sons, Praśūrāma and Kalyāṇa. He was very fond of serving saintly persons. He would sometimes borrow thousands of rupees to use in the service of the devotees. In this way, he became indebted to many persons. When he became very anxious about how he could repay his debts and about the disturbance in his service to the devotees

his debts caused, the Lord appeared to him in a dream and informed him about a huge amount of wealth buried under the earth. Śrī Rāmacandra dug up the buried wealth and used it for the service of the devotees and repaying his debts.

Śrī Abhayarāma

Śrī Abhayarāma was the son of Śrī Akhayarāja and grandson of Bhagavāna dāsa, the king of Lavāna. He had great respect for the dress of a Vaiṣṇava. Once, as he was sitting in the royal court of King Jahangīra, the son of Akbar, a Mughal blasphemed the dress of a Vaiṣṇava. Śrī Abhayarāma immediately took out his sword and cut off his head. Thus, there was a great commotion in the royal court. The king was very angry at Śrī Abhayarāma and ordered his guards to arrest him and put him in jail. People tried to pacify Śrī Abhayarāma, saying, "You will be in jail for some time, but rest assured that you will be released very soon".

Still, Śrī Abhayarāma did not want to be arrested and so he put up a fight in the royal court. He fought valiantly and killed many guards and soldiers before sacrificing his own life. He was not willing to tolerate blasphemy of the Vaiṣṇava dress. He had two sons, Jagarāma and Rāma Singh, and both of them rendered service to saintly persons.

Śrī Bhagavāna

Śrī Pṛthvīrāja Kurama had a son named Bhāramala. Śrī Bhagavāna was the youngest son of Bhāramala. Emperor Akbar respectfully offered him a high position in his royal court. He was a landlord of Lavāna. Akbar was very pleased with his service and attitude and gave him the title Bankeyrājā.

Once, while the Agra Fort was being built, Śrī Bhagavāna set up camp there. The builders asked him to remove his camp so that the foundation could be laid. However, Śrī Bhagavāna did not move, saying, “Let the fort be designed so that he goes around camp.” It is for this reason that Agra Fort has an asymmetrical shape. Seeing his heroic nature, Emperor Akbar greatly respected Śrī Bhagavāna. Because the walls of the fort could not be built in a straight line, Akbar gave Śrī Bhagavāna the title Bankeyrājā, or “crooked king.” From that time onwards, the descendents of Śrī Bhagavāna have been addressed as Bānkāvat.

❀ Śrī Virama ❀

Śrī Virama was the King of Meḍatā, and Śrī Jayamala was his son. There was another Virama who was the king of Jodhapura and the son of Salakhā. There was a third Virama who appeared in the Bhāṭiyā family of Jaisalamera. All of them were very devoted to the Supreme Lord and His devotees. According to another edition of *Bhaktamāla*, one of the Viramas left his opulent lifestyle

as a king and accepted the renounced order of life from Śrī Bhaṭṭadevācārya. He became known as Tyāgijī and had established a few temples at Kisanagaḍa in Rājasthāna.

Śrī Akhayarāja

Śrī Akhayarāja was the second son of Bhagavāna dāsa. As his father had great faith in devotional service, he also took a great vow to render service to the Supreme Lord and His devotees throughout his entire life. He had three sons; Abhayarāma, Śyāmarāma, and Hīradaidāsa. All of them were devoted to the service of saintly persons.

Śrī Rāimala

Śrī Rāimala was the son of Śrī Rāomāladeva, the King of Jodhapura. He was a landlord of Sivānā. His son, Śrī Kalyāṇadāsa, was a devotee and a valiant hero. Śrī Rāimala was very dedicated to the service of the devotees. One day, his wife asked, “Why do you serve the devotees?”

Śrī Rāimala replied, “The Supreme Lord becomes quickly pleased when someone renders service to His devotees. This is the easiest way to have the *darśana* of the Supreme Lord.”

From that day onwards, Śrī Rāimala’s wife also began serving saintly persons with faith and devotion. One day, the Supreme Lord

came to their house in the dress of a devotee. The queen served Him nicely and then asked, “My Lord, when will I have the good fortunate of seeing the Supreme Lord?”

The Supreme Lord in the guise of a devotee replied, “Come with Me and I will show you the Supreme Lord.”

The Supreme Lord took her to a solitary place and showed her His four-armed form. When the Lord was about to depart, the queen caught hold of His hands and said, “My Lord, kindly award Your *darśana* to my husband because I was inspired to serve the devotees by him and no one else.”

In this way, Śrī Rāimāla received the *darśana* of the Supreme Lord by the request of his wife. Śrī Rāimāla felt a little embarrassed that he had seen the Lord by the mercy of his wife. The Lord said to him, “I have fulfilled your desire. Do not consider your devotional position to be inferior because I am always with you.”

Thus, Śrī Rāimāla was favored by the Lord so that he began serving the devotees even more enthusiastically.

Śrī Madhukara Shah

The devotee king of Orchā, Śrī Madhukara Shah, lived according to the meaning of his name. Just as a bee goes from flower to flower to collect honey, so Śrī Madhukara Shah relished the good qualities of the devotees. Just as a bee avoids thorns, twigs, leaves, and

other useless things, Śrī Madhukara Shah never considered a person’s caste, family lineage, bad qualities, or other conceptions of superiority and inferiority with regards to devotees. He simply respected Vaiṣṇava qualities and culture. He had unlimited faith in and love and devotion for the devotees.

Śrī Madhukara Shah was not only the King of Orchā, but also the king of all devotees. He was endowed with great love and devotion for the Supreme Lord and His devotees. Indeed, if anyone wearing a *kañṭhī-mālā* and *tilaka* came before him, he would wash his feet and then drink the water. However, his brothers and other relatives were envious of him because of his Vaiṣṇava behavior.

Once, those envious people brought to him an ass which they had decorated with *tilaka* and many *kañṭhī-mālās*. When Śrī Madhukara Shah saw the ass dressed as a Vaiṣṇava, he immediately offered obeisance and then drank its *caraṇāmṛta*. He then said to the ass, “My dear sir, today you have given me the *darśana* of a Vaiṣṇava and thus you have made my life successful.”

When the envious people witnessed such great devotion for the Vaiṣṇava dress, they were struck with wonder and began to lament for their sinful act. They felt sorry and fell down at the feet of Śrī Madhukara Shah, begging him for forgiveness. Later on, they all became devotees of the Supreme Lord.

Additional Commentary

The King of Orchā, Śrī Madhukara Shah,

was a great warrior and a pious ruler. Seeing his heroism, Emperor Akbar respectfully made an alliance with him. Once, Akbar summoned him to Agra. There were many other devotee kings who would go to the royal court wearing *tilaka* on their forehead, but the great Vaiṣṇava, Śrī Madhukara Shah, would go to the court after putting all the twelve *tilaka* markings on his body.

In order to test his faith and devotion, Akbar declared, "I will sever the head of whoever comes to the royal court tomorrow with *tilaka* on his forehead. The next day, by the order of the Emperor, nobody entering the royal court had *tilaka*, but Śrī Madhukara Shah entered the royal court with a brightly shining marking of *tilaka* on his forehead.

Emperor Akbar said to him, "You did not obey my order and so you will have to suffer the punishment."

Śrī Madhukara Shah bravely replied, "My Lord, Śrī Rājārāma, is a bigger king than you. He is the king of all kings and this *tilaka* is a symbol of His lotus feet. My spiritual master ordered me to wear *tilaka* mark on my forehead every day without fail. I do not consider any order more important than the order of my spiritual master. I consider religious principles to be more important than my very life. If there is anyone bold enough to do so then let him come and wipe the *tilaka* from my forehead."

Upon hearing these heroic words, all the Hindu *kṣatriya* kings became excited so that their blood began to boil. They praised Śrī Madhukara Shah's courage. Emperor

Akbar then glorified his firm faith in religion principles.

Beginning from the next day, all the kings went to the royal court wearing *tilaka*. There is another story about Śrī Madhukara Shah. Every day he would go to an ancient temple of the Lord in the locality of religious speakers and perform *kīrtana*. One day, because he was late in performing his royal duties, he could not go to the temple on time and have *darśana* of the Lord. Later, just to keep his daily routine intact, he went to the back of the temple and began performing *kīrtana*. The Lord, who is affectionate to His devotees, then appeared there and joined Śrī Madhukara Shah in his chanting and dancing.

The demigods showered golden flowers and fragrant articles upon them. Just then, the door of the temple opened so that Śrī Madhukara Shah had *darśana* of the Lord. It is said that whenever a new king is coronated, he is shown one of the golden flowers which was showered on Śrī Madhukara Shah by the demigods.

Text 118

❁ Śrī Khemālaratnā

Śrī Khemālaratnā was a *kṣatriya* of the Rāṭhoḍa family. It is said that Śrī Bhaktidevī remained in his house. His son, Śrī Rāmarayana was endowed with many

good qualities and was always engaged in worshiping Lord Rāma. Śrī Khemālaratna's grandson, Śrī Kiśora Singh, was also very devoted to the devotees of the Lord. Śrī Khemālaratna had a heart as grave as an ocean and he was a reservoir of all good qualities. He was a servant of the servants of the Lord. He was situated in an elevated position of devotional service and always kept the flag of devotional service high. He was a fearless, supremely devoted, and liberal-minded devotee. He regularly sang the glories of Lord Śyāmasundara, considering devotional service to be his supreme asset. He had the strength of the devotees' blessings. He was absorbed in love of God and thus always blissful.

Text 119

❀ Śrī Rāmarayana ❀

In this age of Kali, it is a challenge to strictly follow the path of devotional service and observe religious principles. Just as it is very difficult to string a powerful bow, it is not at all easy to cultivate pure devotional service, but Śrī Rāmarayana easily accomplished that difficult task. He observed the principles of *vaiṣṇava-dharma* in such a way that it never appeared hackneyed, but always fresh and joyful. Like Lord Śiva, he always desired the welfare of all living entities. How could blasphemers and sinful dog-like people understand his glories? Just

as King Duṣyanta married Śakuntala and begot a very powerful son named Bharata, who became an exalted devotee, and whose story is narrated by Śrī Sukadeva in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Śrī Rāmarayana arranged the marriage of his daughter with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who enjoys the *rāsa* dance. His example of devotional life could not be imitated by the other kings. Other kings of his time were not at all of his stature.

Commentary

Once, on a full moon night during autumn, a grand festival of *rāsa-līlā* was arranged. In the *rāsa* dance, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, along with the eight principal *gopīs*, joyfully danced in various novel ways. Everyone present felt blissful by seeing the performance.

King Śrī Rāmarayana and his queen were watching the *rāsa-līlā* performance. After singing and dancing for some time, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa sat on a throne which was kept on the stage. At that time, Śrī Rāmarayana asked his ministers in a devotional mood, "Should we present something to their Lordships?"

The ministers said, "O King, You should offer to the Lord whatever is most dear to you."

After hearing this, the King considered for awhile what might be his favorite possession. Finally, he came to this decision: "I have a daughter who is very dear to me and whose complexion is the color of a dark monsoon cloud. I think that she is a suitable gift for the Lord. This offering would be good

service from me.”

When the King stood up, all the other people wondered what could be his most dear object. Śrī Rāmarayana went inside his palace and brought out his daughter, who was nicely decorated with clothes and ornaments and offered her hands to Rāsabihārī Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Later on, the marriage ceremony was performed according to the prescribed rules and regulations, the oath was read, the marriage was concluded, and the king gave much property and wealth as a dowry.

Text 120

The wife of Śrī Rāmarayana

The wife of King Śrī Rāmarayana was very devoted to Śrī Hari, to her spiritual master, and to saintly persons. Throughout her entire life, she never acted duplicitly. She dutifully followed the instructions of her husband, keeping them within her heart. She was inclined to practice the nine kinds of devotional service. She was detached and remained aloof from worldly religious principles. She accepted service to and devotion for the Vaiṣṇavas as her only goal of life. She had the good intelligence that allowed her to accept the Absolute Truth while rejecting all temporary manifestations. She always maintained the mood of servitorship, she was very liberal, and she

had unalloyed devotion for the Supreme Lord. Saintly persons, as well as King Śrī Rāmarayana, praised her noble activities.

Commentary

Once, King Śrī Rāmarayana and his queen went to Mathurā and remained there for some time rendering service to the devotees and *brāhmaṇas*. Whatever wealth they brought, they used in the service of the devotees. Indeed, they utilized all their wealth so that they did not have enough to return home. It was only when they decided to return home that they understood that they have no money to spend on the way.

The queen had a pair of gold bangles and so the king decided to sell them. At that time, the value of the bangles was five hundred rupees. The queen took off the bangles and gave them to the king, saying, “Please sell them.”

Śrī Rāmarayana and his queen went to the market to sell the bangles but by the arrangement of the Providence, they met Gosvāmī Śrī Nābhā on the way. Śrī Rāmarayana offered his obeisances to Śrī Nābhā and then gave him the bangles. The queen was happy that the king had given her bangles in charity to a saintly person. Seeing her faith and devotion, the king was also very happy. Later on, they borrowed some money and returned home.

Text 121

❀
Śrī Kīśora Singh❀

Śrī Kīśora Singh fulfilled two ambitions of Śrī Khemālaratna. One was that he wished to wear ankle bells and dance before Śrī Girīdharalāla. The second ambition was that he daily fetched sweet water for the service of Śrī Rāmacandra. Śrī Kīśora Singh's speech was always truthful and magnanimous. By his behavior and preaching, he spread the glories of devotional service throughout the land. He was an abode of love for Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, very submissive in nature, and very dear to the devotees. The people of his country praised him, saying, "From his very childhood, Śrī Rāmarayana's son, Śrī Kīśora Singh, possessed all the characteristics of a great personality."

Commentary

While leaving his body at the time of death, Śrī Khemālaratna constantly shed tears. Nobody could understand the reason for this. When Śrī Rāmarayana asked him, "What has happened? What distress are you feeling? Please tell us clearly."

There was no poverty in Śrī Khemālaratna's kingdom. His treasury was full of wealth, of which he gave so much in charity. Śrī Khemālaratna softly replied, "I have two desires in my mind regarding the Lord's service, and those desires remained unfulfilled. Because of this, I am unhappy."

When asked what those two desires were,

Śrī Khemālaratna replied, "I was always busy expanding my kingdom so that although I often thought about those ambitions, I could not fulfill them. Now, I am in the verge of death and so I am angry at myself and thus feeling distress. One of those desires was that I wanted to fetch water and carry it on my head for the service of Lord Sītā-Rāma. The second desire was that I wanted to wear ankle bells and dance before Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra. This is the cause of my distress."

After hearing this statement of Śrī Khemālaratna, his ministers and family members remained silent. However, his grandson, Śrī Kīśora Singh, who was a great devotee of Lord Harī said, "Please order me so that I can fulfill your two ambitions. As long as I am alive, I will endeavor to fulfill the two desires with determination."

When Śrī Khemālaratna heard this from his grandson, Śrī Kīśora Singh, he became very happy and affectionately embraced him. Soon thereafter, he gave up his life with a peaceful mind.

As promised, Śrī Kīśora Singh performed those two activities during the remaining duration of his life. His mind and intelligence were always engaged in glorifying the holy name, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. His life was dedicated to propagating the devotional service to Lord Harī. From his childhood, he had a natural affection for the Lord. Seeing his faith and devotion, all saintly persons highly regarded him, being pleased with him in all respects

Text 122

❀ Śrī Haridāsa ❀

In the family of Śrī Khemālaratna Rāṭhora appeared a pious and devoted son named Śrī Haridāsa. He was a leading devotee of the Supreme Lord and His servants. He was like a reservoir of devotional sentiments. His faith in the Lord was firm and his heart was very pure, like the water of the Gaṅgā. He was unalloyed devotee who fully utilized his mind, words, and actions in the service of the Lord. He perfectly followed the procedures of worship adopted by Śrī Rāmarayana. He considered the mercy and prowess of the spiritual master to be equal to the mercy and prowess of the Supreme Lord. Just as the ocean swells upon seeing the full moon in the śarat season (autumn), Śrī Haridāsa's heart swelled with joy by seeing the devotees of the Supreme Lord.

Additional Commentary

Śrī Haridāsa was very fond of serving the devotees. Once, in his absence, a group of devotees arrived at his house. They were greeted and served very nicely and finally departed. When Śrī Haridāsa returned home and could not see the devotees, he became very sad and ran behind them just to have their *darśana*. Seeing his eagerness, and his love for the devotees, the Lord appeared

before him in the form of a devotee and asked, "Where are you going?"

Śrī Haridāsa replied, "I am looking for the devotees who had come to my house while I was away."

The Lord dressed as a devotee said, "Simply have My *darśana* and then you will automatically receive the benefit of seeing the devotees."

Śrī Haridāsa said, "Can You glorify the Lord as the devotees do? Can you honor *prasāda* like them?"

The Lord replied, "Yes!" The Lord then performed *kīrtana* in such a way that it was as if thousands of devotees were performing *kīrtana*. Śrī Haridāsa took Him to his house and fed Him sumptuous *prasāda*. The Lord in the guise of a devotee ate everything that had been cooked. Śrī Haridāsa thus came to understand that this person was none other than his beloved Lord, appearing in the form of a devotee. Thereafter, the Lord gave Śrī Haridāsa His *darśana* in His original form, thus making his life successful.

Text 123

❀ Śrī Caturbhuja Kirtaniyā ❀

By the mercy of Gosvāmī Śrī Hitaharivaṁśa, Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa converted the entire Goṇḍavānā province into a holy place of pilgrimage. He regularly sang the glories of devotional service. Because of his association

and his preaching, people became servants of the Supreme Lord. By giving the instructions regarding the worship of Śrī Rādhā-vallabha, he converted many persons into unalloyed devotees. His poetry and other literary works were faultless in all respects. He often used the name Muralīdhara in his writings. He considered the dust from the feet of the devotees of Lord Hari to be his ornaments. He regularly smeared that dust all over his head. His heart was always filled with the ecstasy of devotee association and love of God.

Commentary

Before the birth of Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa, there was not even a trace of devotional service to the Lord in the province of Goṇḍavānā. Indeed, no one followed any religious principles. People were generally violent and worshipers of Goddess Kālī. They even performed human sacrifices before the goddess.

Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa went to the temple of Goddess Kālī and whispered a Kṛṣṇa *mantra* into her ears. The goddess accepted Vaiṣṇava initiation in this way, and she told all the villagers in a dream to take shelter of Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa and engage in the service of the Lord and His devotees. She threatened them, saying, “If you refuse to take shelter of Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa then your lives will be spoiled.”

After receiving this order from the goddess, all the people of the village rushed to Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa’s house early in

the morning and surrendered to him. Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa gave them *kañṭhī-mālās*, *tilaka*, and initiation *mantras*. The villagers thus felt a new meaning to their lives by accepting Vaiṣṇava initiation and teachings. Everyone took shelter of Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa’s lotus feet and fixed their minds in the devotional service of the Supreme Lord. In this way, all the people of Goṇḍavānā became truly happy.

Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa cooked varieties of foodstuffs every day and offered them to the Lord with love and devotion. Thereafter, he would serve the *prasāda* to the devotees to their full satisfaction. He would regularly recite Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and preach the cult of devotional service among the common people.

Once, a thief stole someone’s wealth and ran away. The victim ran behind the thief in the hopes of catching him. The thief could not find anywhere to hide and so he entered a crowd of people so that the rich householder could not find him. The thief had previously heard during a recitation of the *Purāṇas* that by accepting *mantra dikṣā* from a bona fide guru, one receives a new life. Considering this, he became a disciple of Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa.

After some time, when he was finally apprehended for stealing, the police asked him about the theft. The thief said, “I have not stolen anything from anyone in this life.”

In order to testify the truth of his statement, a hot iron rod was placed on the palm of his hand. With great faith, the thief

said, "If indeed a person receives a second birth after initiation, as instructed by the spiritual master and the scriptures then may this hot iron rod not burn my hand."

The thief had firm faith in the words of the *Purāṇas* and so the Supreme Lord saved him so that his hands were not burnt. Śrī Priyādāsa says that he very much appreciates this kind of faith and devotion for the Supreme Lord, the spiritual master, and the scriptures.

When the thief passed the test of fire, the local king blamed the rich householder for falsely accusing the benevolent devotee, considering him to be a liar. Thus the king ordered his guards to arrest the rich householder and kill him by hanging. The man was arrested and taken away, but the thief who had now become a devotee could not tolerate the king's unjust punishment of hanging the innocent householder. His eyes filled with tears, the former thief declared, "I stole that rich man's wealth and so he is not lying."

The King said, "O Santjī, you have proved your honesty and so how are you now feeling guilty?"

The former thief replied, "The glories of Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa are without limit. Simply by his mercy, I was proven honest despite being a thief."

After saying this, he narrated the entire story of how he had taken initiation and thus had received a second birth. After hearing this, the king released the rich householder and then approached Śrī Caturbhuja

dāsa and received instruction from him. Being impressed by those instructions by Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa, the king became his disciple.

Once, as a group of devotees was traveling to various holy places of pilgrimage, they came to a field of chick peas. Being hungry, the devotees uprooted the plants and ate the chick peas, but when he saw this, a local person became so angry and upset that his mouth became dry. He shouted, "Do not uproot the crops because this field belongs to Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa."

The devotees replied, "You have nothing to worry about for this is our field."

That person went and informed Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa of the situation. After hearing about what the traveling devotees were doing, Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa very happily brought a lot of *prasāda* and sweets to the field and said to the devotees, "I am very glad that today you have treated me as one of your own."

He then took all the devotees to his house and served them delicious *prasāda*. After *prasāda*, there was a discussion of spiritual subjects in which everyone drank the sweet nectar of love of God. In this way, Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa pleased everybody and also became pleased within himself.

Additional Commentary

In Goṇḍavānā there lived a ghost who was known to everyone. Everyone was frightened by the disturbances created by this ghost and so no one would go near to where he

resided.

Once, Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa, along with some devotees, came to that place and, considering it to be very peaceful, set up camp there. There were many ghosts living there and by the devotional activities of the devotees, and by their *darśana*, most were delivered while only that fled the scene were not. Realizing their misfortune, the ghosts returned to that place, crying in anguish. Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa said, “Who are you and why are you crying? How can you be delivered from your miserable condition?”

The ghosts replied, “We can be delivered only by having the *caranāmṛta* of the devotees.”

The assembled devotees gave the ghosts the water that had washed their feet and thus they were delivered. The messengers of Yamarāja then came there to take away the ghostly souls but when they witnessed the glories of *caranāmṛta* and the power of service to the devotees, they departed to tell about this to their master, Yamarāja.”

By mistake, the Yamadūtas took away the soul of a *brāhmaṇa* and so Yamarāja said, “You have made a mistake. Take this *brāhmaṇa* back and leave him where he was and bring the other person by the same name.”

Meanwhile, the dead body of the *brāhmaṇa* had been placed on the funeral pyre, but suddenly he came back to life. The *brāhmaṇa* had heard the glories of the devotees in the abode of Yamarāja and he narrated that conversation for everyone to hear. He took shelter of Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa and became

his disciple.

Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa resided in the village of Gaḍā in the province of Goṇḍavānā. Śrī Dāmodara dāsa, who was known as Śrī Sevaka, was his good friend. Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa became detached from worldly life and set out for Vṛṇḍāvana to take initiation from Śrī Hītaharīvamsa. But before he arrived in Vṛṇḍāvana, Śrī Hītaharīvamsa left this world and so he took initiation from Śrī Vanacandrācārya.

Śrī Caturbhuja dāsa and his friend, Śrī Dāmodara dāsa, were great devotees who had love and devotion for the service of saintly persons.

Text 124

❀ ❀ Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Cālaka ❀ ❀

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Cālaka’s unique singing and his melodious songs became famous even across the ocean. All the people of the world sang songs composed by him and felt great happiness. Indra, the King of the demigods, displayed his anger upon the residents of Vraja when his worship was stopped. As a result, Śrī Kṛṣṇa enacted the pastime of lifting Govardhana Hill. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Cālaka elaborately wrote about this pastime and also sang about it. He composed many literatures, including *Rāsa Pañcādhyāyī*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Rukmiṇī-keli, and Śrī Bhojana-vidhi. In all of his composition he used the

term Girirājadharaṇa. His voice was grave and sweet like the sound of a thundering cloud. In order to remove the ignorance from the conditioned souls, his preaching of devotional service was as brilliant as the sun.

Additional Commentary

Once, a professional singer copied Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Cālaka's compositions and, claiming them to be his own, recited them before the king. The king rewarded him with much wealth. As a result of this fraud committed at the expense of a devotee, the singer's head began to ache. The Supreme Lord appeared to the king in a dream, asking him to chastise the singer and make him give whatever wealth he had received to Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa. In this way, the Lord relieved the singer from both royal punishment and Yamarāja's punishment. Thereafter, the singer promised not to commit such an offense again and he began to ace in a humble manner in the presence of saintly persons.

Text 125

❁ Śrī Santadāsa ❁

Śrī Santadāsa displayed the limit of *vaiṣṇava-dharma* in this world. He appeared in the family of Śrī Vimalānanda Prabodha. He had strong attachment for the lotus feet of Śrī Gopīnātha. He would cook fifty-six

preparations of delicious foodstuffs and offer them to his Lord. Following in the footsteps of King Pṛthu, he rendered service to his beloved Lord Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha. He considered the Supreme Lord and His devotees to be on the same transcendental platform and so he described their glories in that way. His poetry was similar to that of Śrī Sūra dāsa. He described the Supreme Lord's birth and pastimes in a most intelligent and interesting manner. He understood the confidential mystery of pure devotional service and its unique position.

Commentary

The great devotee, Śrī Santadāsa, resided in the village of Nivāi. His intelligence was fixed at the lotus feet of Lord Śyāmasundara. One day, he thought to offer fifty-six food preparations to the Lord. Although he had little wealth, he made some arrangement and prepared fifty-six items and offered them to his Deity. The Lord reciprocated and displayed His true love for His devotees.

Śrī Santadāsa served the Lord with such love and devotion that Lord Jagannātha personally accepted and relished his offerings. Indeed, the Lord revealed this to the King of Purī in a dream, saying that He took great pleasure in relishing foodstuffs cooked by Śrī Santa. Śrī Santa dāsa purchased the Lord with his love and devotion, and by revealing his name, Lord Jagannātha disclosed his glories to the world. By His revelation, the Lord also showed how He is controlled by His devotees' love. All the

pure devotees realize that the Lord is very kind to His devotees. The Lord's affection for His devotees is glorified in many places in the Vedas and *Purāṇas*.

Additional Commentary

Śrī Santa dāsa resided in the village of Nivāi, which is between Jaipur and Tonk City. Even today, one can see the Deity of Śrī Gopīnātha there. The descendents of Śrī Santa dāsa engage in the Deity's service.

Once, Śrī Santa dāsa went to Śrī Jagannātha Purī to have the *darśana* of the Lord. When he saw the *chāppāṇna-bhoga*, he desired to also offer this to the Lord. Thus he invited Lord Jagannātha to come to his village and accept *chāppāṇna-bhoga*. Śrī Santa dāsa returned home, prepared *chāppāṇna-bhoga*, and offered it to the Lord Jagannātha, who accepted everything.

On the second day, Lord Jagannātha remained there and Śrī Santa dāsa somehow managed to prepare and offer *chāppāṇna-bhoga*. On the third day, Śrī Santa dāsa sold all his household objects and prepared *chāppāṇna-bhoga* for the Lord. Thereafter, he folded his hands and prayed to Lord Jagannātha, saying, "My Lord, You should now kindly return to Your own residence at Purī. I can no longer arrange for Your *chāppāṇna-bhoga*."

Lord Jagannātha replied, "I am attracted by your love and devotion and so I do not wish to return home. Therefore I will issue an order to the king in a dream so that he makes the arrangement for *chāppāṇna-*

bhoga here."

In this way, the Supreme Lord made the necessary arrangements for the *chāppāṇna-bhoga* offering.

Text 126

Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana

Śrī Sūradāsa's and Śrī Madanamohana's names always appear together. Śrī Sūradāsa Madanamohana was very expert in the arts of singing and composing literary works. His heart was very simple and filled with devotional mellows. He always engaged in working for the welfare of others. He was an incarnation of one of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's *sakhis*. He was qualified to relish Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's intimate pastimes. He sang the glories of the highest transcendental *rasa*, known as *ṣṛṅgāra-rasa*.

When he would sing about the Lord's pastimes, his words appeared to expand and spread everywhere. The Supreme Lord accepted him as His dear devotee. Just as the Aśvinī-kumāras were inseparable from one another, the devotees Śrī Sūradāsa and Lord Śrī Madana-mohana were inseparable. That is how Śrī Sūradāsa was intimately connected with the Lord.

Commentary

When Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana was a householder, his name was Sūradhvaja.

His spiritual master gave him the name Sūradāsa. He was not the blind Sūradāsa. His eyes were as broad and beautiful as a lotus flower. His eyes would always hanker after drinking the nectar of Lord Kṛṣṇa's beauty. He led a devotional life and also inspired others to lead devotional lives.

Emperor Akbar employed Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana as the commissioner of Saṇḍile in the district of Hardoi, U.P. His heart was always filled with ever-increasing love of God so that his behavior was always pleasing to others.

Once, he bought a huge quantity of jaggery from the market at Saṇḍile, thinking that he would prepare *mālapura* with it and offer it to Lord Madana-mohanalāla. Thinking like this, he loaded the sacks of jaggery onto bullock carts and set out for Vṛṇḍāvana-dhāma.

In Vṛṇḍāvana, the cost of jaggery was twenty times more than in his village. The carts arrived in Vṛṇḍāvana at night, when the Lord was taking rest and so the jaggery was kept in a storeroom. That night, Śrī Madana-mohanalāla ordered His *pūjārī* and storekeeper in a dream, saying, "There is so much jaggery in the store room. Prepare *mālapura* with it and offer it to Me."

Actually, the jaggery brought by His devotee with love and devotion was fit for the Lord's offering and so the *pūrārīs* and Deity cooks prepared a great quantity of *mālapura*. The Lord was then awoken from His sleep and offered the *mālapura*.

Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana composed

many songs and poetry in glorification of the Supreme Lord. One day, Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana went to have the *darśana* of Śrī Madana-mohanalāla. While he was at the temple, a devotee who wanted to test Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana's faith and devotion arrived and took off his shoes just outside the temple door.

That devotee said to Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana, "Could you please watch my shoes as I go inside the temple to have the *darśana* of the Lord?"

Saying this, that devotee went into the temple and sat down with the devotees performing congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord. All the while, Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana watched the devotee's shoes while happily thinking, "For so long I was only singing the glories of the Lord, but today this devotee has fulfilled my desire."

The head priest and the *pūjārīs* repeatedly called Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana to come inside the temple but he said, "Today my worshipable Lord has given me a grave responsibility. This service is very dear to me because I am simply meditating on the lotus feet of a devotee."

After hearing this, all of the priests, along with the devotee who was testing him, came outside the temple to witness his strong faith and devotion.

Once, there was a drought in his province and so Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana used all of the revenue that he had collected for Emperor Akbar for serving saintly persons

and others. He was not at all afraid of the consequences he may have face for this act. The cause of his fearlessness was that he was fully absorbed in love of God and therefore did not care for anyone.

When Emperor Akbar sent the officials from his revenue department to collect the taxes from Saṇḍile village, they said to Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana, “Follow the emperor’s order and give us the tax money.”

Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana then gave them a big box filled with stones and pebbles. He also gave them a note wherein it was written that the total income from Saṇḍile village was thirteen lakhs, and that this amount had been distributed among all the devotees of the locality. Now, we are all going to Śrī Vṛṇḍāvana.

Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana locked the box and sent it to Delhi. Before the box could reach its destination, Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana left home. The box arrived at Delhi and was opened before Emperor Akbar. He was certainly very surprised to find stones and pebbles in place of the tax money. When he read the note that accompanied the box, Akbar became pleased with Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana and his behavior and so he did not take any action against him.

The Emperor sent his men to bring Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana to Delhi and gave them a message, saying, “I am very pleased by your service to saintly persons.”

However, Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana did not accept Emperor Akbar’s invitation. He wrote a letter in reply, saying, “I have

brought my body to Śrī Vṛṇḍāvana-dhāma and surrendered it there. Therefore I am unable to go anywhere else.”

Emperor Akbar didn’t say anything when he received this reply, but his finance minister, Ṭoḍaramala, said to the officers, “Since Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana had misused royal funds, he should be arrested and brought here.”

The non-devotee, foolish minister had Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana arrested and brought to Delhi. The merciless Ṭoḍaramala put him under the control of the very sinful and wicked jailor, Dastama Khān. The jailor locked up Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana and began torturing him mercilessly. After some days, Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana was able to write a note and send it to Akbar, who became very pleased by reading it. The Emperor had Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana released from jail and said so him, “You can go to Vṛṇḍāvana and reside there. I have cancelled your debt of thirteen lakhs in taxes.”

Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana returned to Vṛṇḍāvana and devoted his body, life, and words in the glorification of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s sweet, transcendental pastimes. While absorbed in ecstatic love of God, he composed many songs and poetry which were dear to the devotees.

Once, Śrī Sūradāsa Madana-mohana composed a song in Vṛṇḍāvana, but by the wil of Providence, it was sung eight hundred kilometers away that same day. Whoever heard his songs appreciated the extent of his

literary expertise. Although he appeared in a *brāhmaṇa* family as Sūrādhvaja, he became a detached devotee known as Śrī Sūrādāsa Madana-mohana.

He was given the service of guarding Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's groves in Vṛṇḍāvana. This is not an astonishing achievement for a devotee of the caliber of Śrī Sūrādāsa Madana-mohana. Śrī Rādhā-Madana-mohana was his worshipable Lord.

❀ Text 127 ❀

❀ Śrī Kātyāyāni ❀

Who can properly describe the loving characteristics of the lady devotee, Śrī Kātyāyānī? No poet on the earth could sufficiently glorify her love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She was so much absorbed in love of God that even while walking in the street alone, she would loudly sing of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. At such times, she considered the movements of the leaves in the trees to be the accompaniment of drums and *karatālas*. Feeling grateful for their assistance and service, she rewarded them with gifts of her ornaments and garments. She performed her *bhajana* by following in the footsteps of the *gopīs* of Vraja. Her voice was often choked up due to her love and affection. She was always aloof from worldly affairs. *Māyā*, or illusion, could not touch her. Her loving sentiments were highly praised and

accepted by all saintly persons and so they always gave her encouragement.

❀ Text 128 ❀

❀ Śrī Murārīdāsa ❀

Śrī Murārīdāsa resided in the famous village of Viloṇḍā in the province of Mārawār. All the devotees knew him. Every year, he would arrange for a grand festival. Once, during the grand festival, it was shown in the midst of all the devotees that he was an eternal associate of the Supreme Lord. In the *saṅkīrtana* festival of chanting the holy names of Lord Hari, he wore ankle bells on his legs and sang of the characteristics of Lord Śrī Rāma. Because of his ecstatic mood and pleasing, melodious singing, the audience was able to directly witness the pastimes of the Lord.

Śrī Murārīdāsa was an expert classical musician. He liked to sing in the *deśī-sāraṅga-rāga*. Once, as he was giving a performance of a song describing Śrī Rāmacandra's going to the forest, he became so distressed out of separation from the Lord that he merged his life air with Lord Rāma. Just as Queen Kuntī left her body in separation from Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Murārīdāsa gave up his body in separation from Śrī Rāma.

Śrī Murārīdāsa was the spiritual master of the king and a servant of the Lord's devotees. Once, as he was returning home

after bathing, he heard a devotee calling out loudly. That devotee belonged to low caste, but every day he engaged in the devotional service of the Lord. On that particular day, after worshipping the Lord, that devotee was calling out, "If anyone wants to have the Lord's *caraṇāmṛta*, come and take some."

As soon as Śrī Murārīdāsa heard this, he went to that devotee's house. However, the devotee began to tremble in fear. Śrī Murārīdāsa said, "Please give me some *caraṇāmṛta*. I will drink it and thus sustain my life."

The devotee replied, "I am a fallen and low class person. I am not fit to give you *caraṇāmṛta*."

Śrī Murārīdāsa said, "You are a devotee. You are purer and more kind-hearted than I. No one knows your glories or your real identity, but my mind has become attracted by seeing your attachment to the devotional service of the Lord."

Tears of joy began flowing from the eyes of that devotee. He said, "Please do not take *caraṇāmṛta* from me. I have made a mistake and as a result, I felt very disturbed in my mine. I should not have called you like this. You are a great devotee whose intelligence is fixed in devotional service. I have no qualification to give you *caraṇāmṛta*."

Śrī Murārīdāsa was an experienced devotee and so he forcibly took some *caraṇāmṛta* from that devotee. He thought, "Devotional service is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa. In pure devotional service there is no question of caste or creed. All such material

designations and seeming defects are nullified by engagement in the devotional service of the Lord."

Soon, all the people of the village came to know that Śrī Murārīdāsa had accepted *caraṇāmṛta* from that low-class person. Envious people criticized Śrī Murārīdāsa and finally went and complained to the king. The king also did not like this kind of behavior and so one day he went to Śrī Murārīdāsa's house to observe his real mood. Śrī Murārīdāsa understood that, although the king had previously respected him, now, after hearing of the incident of accepting *caraṇāmṛta*, his heart had changed.

Seeing the evil motive of these people, Śrī Murārīdāsa left all his things and went somewhere else. This did not disturb him because his love was for the Supreme Personality of Godhead and not for any worldly possessions.

When the king came to know about this, he felt distressed. Every year, the king arranged a grand festival in which all the devotees were invited. Many exalted saintly persons attended the festival, in which there was *kīrtana* and discussions of subjects in relation with the Lord. But after Śrī Murārīdāsa's departure, no devotees came to attend the festival. Finally, the king personally went to the place where Śrī Murārīdāsa resided so that he could bring him back.

The king approached Śrī Murārīdāsa and fell to the ground to offer his respectful obeisances. He bowed his head again and again and shed tears. Śrī Murārīdāsa did

not even look at the king, thinking him to be envious of the devotees. Again, the king very humbly offered his obsequies. The people in the vicinity began to comment that this was the true relationship between a spiritual master and a disciple.

The king simply stood with folded hands. His mind and intelligence were steeped in humility as he said, "Please punish me thousands of times for my offence. I am ready to accept any punishment, but please look at me and give me your blessings. My mind is polluted and so I am in need of your special mercy. I have surrendered myself at your lotus feet and so kindly accept me as your fallen servant."

After hearing such humble words from the king, Śrī Murārīdāsa became pleased with him and told him stories of many devotees, such as Vālmikī, the dog-eater. He also presented many scriptural statements as evidence and thus he established the supreme glory of devotional service to the Lord.

Śrī Murārīdāsa maintained no conception of superior or inferior with regards to birth. Finally, he went with the king, and upon his arrival, many saintly persons and others came to meet him. The grand festival was again arranged and this time, there were more people in attendance. All this was made possible simply by the mercy and presence of Śrī Murārīdāsa. In this way, all the king's desires were fulfilled.

The grand festival was arranged in the presence of Śrī Murārīdāsa and many

experienced and expert dancers and singers participated. The sounds of dancing, singing, and chanting of the Lord's holy names spread in the four directions.

The assembled devotees had a desire to witness the dancing of Śrī Murārīdāsa. Śrī Murārīdāsa understood this, as he was a very experienced devotee. He put on ankle bells and began dancing and singing melodiously. In that performance, he narrated the story of Śrī Rāmacandra's going to the forest. While singing and dancing, he was unable to tolerate the pangs of separation and so his life went to Lord Rāma in the forest. As a result, his body remained still, just like a painting.

Seeing this scene, all the people felt very sad. They said, "It appears that Śrī Murārīdāsa has gone back to Lord Rāmacandra and will not return."

The devotees then pacified the ordinary people by saying, "Just decorate your hearts with the divine *darśana* and the loving sentiments of Śrī Murārīdāsa. This is the actual benefit one can obtain from the association of saintly persons."

Text 129

❀
Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa
❀

In order to deliver the conditioned souls in this fearful age of Kali, the poet and great sage, Vālmikī, incarnated as Gosvāmī

Śrī Tulasīdāsa. Vālmikī had compiled the great literature, Śrī Rāmāyaṇa, in the Tretā-yuga. This great epic, Rāmāyaṇa, consists of ten million verses. Simply by uttering each and every syllable of this literature, one is liberated from all grave sinful reactions, even the killing of a *brāhmaṇa*.

In this age of Kali, just to give pleasure to the devotees of the Lord, Śrī Vālmikī again appeared to propagate the pastimes of Lord Śrī Rāma. He appeared as Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa and compiled many literatures, including Śrī Rāma-carita-mānasa. Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa was always intoxicated by drinking the nectar of Śrī Sitā-Rāma's lotus feet. He very strictly followed all the rules and regulations of spiritual life. He constantly chanted the holy name of Śrī Rāma. He constructed a beautiful and easily accessible boat in the form of Śrī Rāmacarita-mānasa so that people can easily cross beyond the ocean of material existence.

Commentary

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa had much affection for his wife in the beginning of his married life. Once, his wife went to her father's house without his permission. At that time, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa was not at home. When he returned home and came to know that his wife had left, he felt aggrieved and lost his good intelligence. He quickly went to her father's house, and when she saw him, she became embarrassed and these words somehow came from her mouth. "My

body is a bag of bones and flesh covered by skin and so it is not at all fit to be loved, nor can one's love for this body remain forever. One's eternal love and affection should be directed to Śrī Rāma's transcendental form. You should therefore give your love and devotion to Him."

When Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa heard these words from the mouth of his wife, his illusion instantly vanished so that he became enlightened by the sunshine of transcendental knowledge. He immediately stood up and left for Kāśī Purī. There, he engaged in the service of Lord Sitā-Rāma with firm faith and unalloyed devotion. Indeed, his eyes were always thirsty to have the *darśana* of Lord Śrī Rāmacandra.

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa resided at Kāśī and to attending nature's call he would go across the Aśī River. While returning, he would pour the remaining water from his water pot at the root of a berry plant. In that plant lived a ghost named Harīrāma, who was formerly a *brāhmaṇa* from Duboulī village who had been cursed by Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa.

One day, after drinking the left over water from Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa's water pot, the ghost said, "Please ask me for anything you want."

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa replied, "Help me to have the *darśana* of Śrī Rāmacandra."

However, being unable to do this, the ghost gave Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa the location of Śrī Hanumān and said, "In such and such place, narrations of Śrī Rāmāyaṇa are heard and they are very pleasing to the ear

and heart. For this reason, Śrī Hanumān goes there every day to hear *rāma-kathā*. He is always the first person to arrive there and the last person to depart. However, his appearance is very ugly.”

After delivering the ghost, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa took his advice, went to that place, and immediately recognized Śrī Hanumān. After the recitation of *Rāmāyaṇa*, when Śrī Hanumān departed, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa followed him. They passed through an inhabited area and then entered a forest, which is at present known as Śaṅkaṭamocana Forest. Finding Hanumān alone, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa fell down at his lotus feet. However, Śrī Hanumān began to chastise him as he tried to drive him away.

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa mildly said, “You cannot push me away from your lotus feet because I have clearly understood that you are the embodiment of ecstatic love for Śrī Rāmacandra.”

Seeing Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa’s faith and determination, Śrī Hanumān revealed his natural, beautiful form, which is glorified in many transcendental literatures, beginning with *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Śrī Hanumān said, “Alright, you may ask from me the benediction you desire.”

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa replied, “Please show me the form of Śrī Rāmacandra in His dress as a king. My eyes always hanker after seeing this form of Śrī Rājā Rāma.”

Śrī Hanumān advised, “Go to Citrakuṭa and there you will have the Lord’s *darśana*.”

From that time onwards, Gosvāmī Śrī

Tulasīdāsa’s desire to see Lord Rāma increased, day by day. He restrained his emotions and went to Citrakuṭa-dhāma. On the way, he always thought, “When will that auspicious moment come when I will have the *darśana* of the sweet beauty of my Lord Rāma?”

Thereafter, while performing *parikramā* of Śrī Kāmadagiri Mountain, Lord Rāma and Lord Lakṣmaṇa, riding upon horses, appeared before Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa. Both were dressed in green garments, which were suitable for hunting in the forest. Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa saw the Lord but thought that He must be a prince hunting in the forest.

After that, Śrī Hanumān approached Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa and said, “Have you had the *darśana* of your beloved Lord Śrī Rāma Rāghava?”

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa replied, “I was not able to see Him as you had promised.”

Śrī Hanumān said, “Do not worry, for you will have His *darśana* again at another time.”

Once, a *brāhmaṇa*, after killing another *brāhmaṇa*, traveled to many holy places of pilgrimage in order to atone for his sinful act. He arrived at Kāśī and shouted in public, “O Rāma! O Rāma! I am a murderer. Please save me.”

When Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa heard the beautiful name of Rāma, he invited that murderer *brāhmaṇa* to his home so that they had the *prasāda* of the Lord while seated together. In this way, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa purified the *brāhmaṇa* and together they

glorified the pastimes and holy name of Śrī Rāma.

When the *brāhmaṇas* of Kāśī heard about this incident, they arranged a meeting and summoned Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa. All the scholars asked, “How can this killer of a *brāhmaṇa* be relieved of the sinful reaction without undergoing atonement? How could you have your meal sitting with a person who has been ostracized from society?”

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa replied, “You diligently study religious scriptures but you do not understand their instructions. Because of that, your mind and opinions are immature.”

The *paṇḍitas* of Kāśī said, “We have read the glories of the holy name of Śrī Rāma in many scriptures, and those statements are certainly correct. But where is the evidence that the killer of a *brāhmaṇa* can atone simply by chanting the holy names of the Lord?”

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa replied, “Please tell me what is required for you to believe this?”

The *paṇḍitas* said, “If Śrī Śaṅkara’s carrier, Nandī, eats from this sinful *brāhmaṇa*’s hands, we will accept him and allow him to sit with us and have his meal.”

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa agreed with their proposal and gave the *brāhmaṇa* a plate of *prasāda*. All of them then went to Nandīśvara, which is situated near Jñānavāpi at Kāśī. Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa prayed, “O Nandīśvara, your mind and intelligence are always saturated with the holy name of Śrī

Rāma. You know the glories of the holy name of Śrī Rāma, whereas I cannot even describe a small portion. If you consider that this *brāhmaṇa* has become purified by the power of chanting the holy name of Lord Rāma then kindly accept *prasāda* from his hands and thus establish the glories of the holy names.”

Śrī Nandīśvara was very pleased to hear these prayers and he gladly honored the *prasāda*. All the assembled people glorified Lord Rāmacandra and His holy name, and also highly praised Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa.

Once, some thieves entered Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa’s āśrama, hoping to steal wealth, books, and whatever else they might find. As they were about to enter, they saw a blackish beautiful personality standing before them with a bow and arrow in His hands, guarding the āśrama. His complexion was the color of a dark monsoon cloud. The thieves circled the āśrama, again and again, but whenever they would attempt to enter, the black-complexioned guard with a bow and arrow frightened them.

The thieves went away for awhile and then came back, but again the guard drove them away so that they were unable to steal anything. In the morning, the thieves went to Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa and asked, “Who is that blackish personality guarding your āśrama at night with a bow and arrow in His hands? Where is He now?”

After hearing this, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa was unable to speak and simply remained silent as tears of love flowed from his eyes.

He considered in his mind that the king of kings, Lord Rāmacandra, had taken the trouble of guarding his insignificant wealth and āśrama.”

Considering that he had committed an offense by engaging the Lord in his service, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa distributed all his wealth in charity. Upon realizing that the blackish complexioned young boy was none other than Śrī Rāmacandra, the thieves came and fell at the feet of Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa and accepted him as their spiritual master. Their hearts having become purified, they gave up their stealing profession.

Once, a *brāhmaṇa* had left his body and his wife was prepared to ascend the funeral pyre of her husband. At that time, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa was sitting on the doorstep of his cottage and performing his *bhajana*. The wife saw him from a distance and offered her obsequies at his feet. Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa blessed her by saying, “My you live a long life.”

She said, “O Mahārāja, my husband has died and I am going to the crematorium to ascend his funeral pyre. What then is the use of your blessing?”

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa said, “Now that I have uttered this blessing, if you and all the members of your family worship Lord Śrī Rāma then I can bring your husband back to life.”

The wife summoned all the relatives and said, “If all of you promise to render devotional service to Śrī Rāma with a purified mind then my dead husband will

come back to life.”

All the relatives respectfully agreed and began chanting the holy name of Śrī Rāma. Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa then revived the husband and instructed him in how to lead a beautiful devotional life. Being influenced by this incident, all the other family members became devotees of the Supreme Lord. In this way, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa cured many people’s disease of aversion to the Lord. The Supreme Lord is not realized or seen as long as one is averse to Him.

After hearing the glories of Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa, the king of Delhi sent his commanders to Kāśī. The royal guards went there and said to the local administrative officers, “Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa brought a dead *brāhmaṇa* back to life. Hearing this news, the king of Delhi wants to see him and so we have come here to take him to Delhi without any inconvenience.”

The local officers went to Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa and requested him to accompany the king’s men to Delhi. Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa agreed and set out from Kāśī. He arrived in Delhi and went to see the king, who respectfully greeted him. The king had Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa seated on a throne and then spoke to him with sweet words, saying, “The news of your miracle and prowess has spread all over the world. You have surpassed everyone by your influence. The devotees of the Lord are becoming maddened by ecstatic love by following your instructions. Kindly show me a miracle as well.”

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa said, “Whatever you have heard are false rumors. I don’t perform miracles. All I know is Lord Śrī Rāma and I simply worship Him.”

Hearing this, Emperor Akbar said, “Then only show your miracles to Rāma. That way I will also see what Rāma looks like.”

Saying this, the king put him in jail. Thereafter, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa meditated on Hanumāna within his heart and prayed, “You are an ocean of mercy. Please be kind to this servant.”

When Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa finished his prayer, hundreds and thousands of monkeys of various shapes and colors suddenly appeared, creating havoc all over the city. They poked people’s bodies with their nails, tore the queen’s garments, and in many other ways created a big disturbance throughout the city. Indeed, they broke the walls of the forts, and with those stones injured many people so that everyone became frightened, having no idea of whom they should take shelter. People thought, “The devastation of the world has begun and so none of us will survive.

While seeing this disturbance, the king’s eyes opened wide as he understood the actual cause of this calamity. He said, “Now only Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa can save us. I surrender all my wealth and everything else unto him.”

Being frightened and greatly disturbed by the monkeys, the King of Delhi approached Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa, saying, “Please spare our lives. Only if you save us will we

be spared, and not otherwise.”

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa said, “Just wait and you will see something more.”

The King was embarrassed as he profusely lamented and begged forgiveness from Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa. Finally, the havoc created by the monkeys subsided. Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa said, “Now your fort belongs to Lord Śrī Rāma and so you should vacate it without delay.”

After hearing this, the king actually left his fort and built a new fort, or *nayā-kilā*, which is now known as New Delhi. Even today nobody lives in that old fort because it belongs to Lord Rāma. If anyone tries to stay there, his body becomes thin, day by day.

After this incident, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa left Delhi and went to Vṛṇḍāvana, where he met Śrī Nābhā and thus became very happy. Śrī Nābhā showed him the manuscript of this book, Śrī Bhaktamāla. Both of them were very pleased to meet one another.

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsaji went to the temple of Śrī Madana-gopāla in Vṛṇḍāvana and had the *darśana* of Lord Kṛṣṇa there. He prayed, “My dear Lord, Your beautiful form is indescribable, but still, my worshipable Lord is Śrī Rāmacandra.”

After hearing this prayer, which conveyed the mood of His devotee, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifested His form as Lord Śrī Rāma. Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa became jubilant seeing his worshipable Lord standing before him.

Once, a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa told

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa, “Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is full with the sixteen attributes and therefore supremely glorious, whereas Śrī Rāmacandra is His plenary portion. Therefore you should worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa replied, “My mind and heart are irrevicably attached to the enchanting form of Śrī Rāma. Formerly, I loved Him because He was the son of King Daśaratha, and because His form was supremely attractive, without comparison, but now I can understand that He is also the Personality of Godhead and so my love for Him has increased twenty times.

Additional Commentary

There was a *brāhmaṇa* named Śrī Udaya Prakāśa who resided on the shore of the Yamunā at Vṛṇḍāvana. Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa gave him a Deity of Śrī Rāma in His childhood form and named Him Kauśalyānandana. Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa also visited Gokula, where he had the *darśana* of Śrī Gokulanātha and met Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha. From Vṛṇḍāvana, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa went to Citrakuṭa-dhāma.

Once, a *brāhmaṇa* approached Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa to take sannyāsa from him. However, the *brāhmaṇa* was not mature enough to accept the renounced order of life. Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa understood the lusty desires within his heart and so refused to award him *sannyāsa*.

That same night, queen Kadambalatā went to have the *darśana* of Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa, and when the *brāhmaṇa* saw her,

he became captivated by her beauty. Seeing this, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa explained to the *brāhmaṇa* how he was not qualified to accept the renounce order of life and so should return home.

However, the *brāhmaṇa* said, “Only you are capable of removing my lusty desires. I cannot get rid of them by my own endeavors.”

Finally, Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa removed the lusty desires from the *brāhmaṇa*’s heart, transforming him into a saintly person.

Once, an elderly man, afflicted by poverty, was going to drown himself in the Gaṅgā. Being merciful to him, mother Gaṅgā gave him a śilā, and by worshiping it, he became a wealthy man.

Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa met Śrī Sūradāsa at Citrakūṭa in the year 1616 Samvat Era. Some scholars express a difference in opinion in this regard. Śrī Nandalāla of Saṇḍile stayed with Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa for six months studying Śrī Rāmarakṣā-stotra. While departing, he gave a śālagrāma-śilā to Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa. He also gave him Śrī Rāma-kavaca, which he had written, and a new blanket.

Many exalted personalities came to discuss subjects regarding the Lord with Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsa. Śrī Yādavācārya, Śrī Venimādhava, Śrī Ananayamādhava, Śrī Citasukha, Śrī Karuṇeśa, Śrī Sadānanda, Śrī Tapasvī Murārīdāsa, Śrī Nāgābābā, Śrī Virahī Bhagavanta, Śrī Vibhavananda, Śrī Deva, Śrī Dineśa, and Śrī Pille Svāmī of South India are some of the saintly persons worth mentioning.

Text 130

Śrīmāna Dāsa

Śrīmāna Dāsa presented the confidential pastimes of Lord Śrī Rāmacandra in the form of literature, and also by his singing. In his descriptions of the characteristics of Śrī Rāma, he described the various *rasas*, such as *karuṇa*, *vīra*, and *ujjvala-sṛṅgāra*. His poetry was appreciated by all poets. Śrīmāna Dāsa was a benefactor of others, very patient, and well behaved. He took a firm vow to render service to the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Rāmacandra, the King of Kauśala. He remained fully absorbed throughout the entire day and night describing, studying, and thinking about the glorious fame of the Lord of Jānakī. He narrated Śrī Rāmāyana, Śrī Hanumann-āṭaka, and other confidential literatures in simple yet devotional language.

Additional Commentary

Once, as Śrīmāna Dāsa was engaged in meditating on Śrī Rāma, the Lord revealed His enchanting form which attracts the minds of everyone within the three worlds. Śrī Rāma ordered him to sing about His confidential pastimes and so those pastimes immediately began manifesting in his heart.

Once, a poor *brāhmaṇa* approached Śrīmāna Dāsa for financial assistance because of his daughter's marriage. Śrīmāna Dāsa sold some of the Deities' silver articles

and gave him the money. Such was his charitable nature.

Once, as Śrīmāna Dāsa was feeding some devotees in his house, he fell from the roof while absorbed in ecstatic love. The Supreme Lord manifested and caught him on His lap.

Text 131

Śrī Giridharalāl

Śrī Giridharalāl appeared in the family of Śrī Vallabhācārya and manifested a nature like that of a desire tree. To the surrendered devotees, he awarded religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation, and above all, devotional service to Śrī Hari. He had complete knowledge of the Vedic scriptures, as if he held them in the palm of his hand like an emblic myrobalan. His method of worship attracted the mind of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of the King of Vraja. Simply by seeing him, everyone became purified. Whenever he would sit in an assembly of devotees and speak about Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it appeared as if a shower of love of God sprinkled on the audience. Śrī Giridharalāl was the son of Śrī Vithalanātha and was sublime and gentle in nature. There was no one within the world who could compare with him.

Additional Commentary

Śrī Giridharalāl had a disciple who was a *vaiśya* by caste. He had vast wealth and property in his possession, but he utilized everything in the service of his spiritual master and Lord Govinda. And yet, by the influence of time, his wealth became depleted so that he became poverty-stricken. After some days, he left this world. His son was also a devotee and like his father, he regularly engaged in the devotional service of the Lord. But due to lack of wealth, he was not able to render very nice service to the Lord and His devotees. Therefore he approached Śrī Giridharalāl and said, "In spite of having a spiritual master like you, who are like a desire tree, my financial condition is very bad."

Thereafter, by the mercy of Śrī Giridharalāl, he became prosperous in due course of time. In that prosperous condition, he became eager to have the *darśana* of the Lord and so he asked Śrī Giridharalāl about how that could be attained. Śrī Giridharalāl said, "Only by pure love and devotion one can attain the Supreme Lord. Therefore you should engage in devotional service, especially by chanting of the holy names of the Lord."

The *vaiśya*'s son asked, "My dear sir, what are the symptoms of pure love and devotion?"

Śrī Giridharalāl said, "As soon as one remembers the Lord, tears begin to flow from the eyes, the hairs of his body stand on end, and his voice becomes choked. These are the symptoms of pure love of God."

According to the order of Śrī Giridharalāl, the *vaiśya*'s son began serving the Lord, worshiping Him, and chanting His holy names. And yet, he did not develop any loving symptoms and so he again went to Śrī Giridharalāl and asked him about the cause of his lack of advancement in devotional service.

Śrī Giridharalāl embraced him so that immediately he began shedding tears of love of God. The Supreme Lord appeared to him like a flash of lightning and then disappeared. This disciple requested Śrī Giridharalāl to bless him so that he could again have the *darśana* of the Lord. In response, the Lord spoke to Śrī Giridharalāl, saying, "This person has committed a grave offence, and because of this, he will not be able to again have My *darśana*. His wife engages in the service of My devotees and yet he always chastises her. This is his offence."

After hearing this, the *vaiśya* devotee promised not to create any more impediments for serving the devotees. Finally, the Lord again gave him His *darśana*.

Text 132

❁ ❁
Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha

❁ ❁
Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha was a grandson of Śrī Vallabhācārya, and the fourth son of Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha. He was a storehouse of divine qualities. He was a grave, undisturbed,

unfathomable yet spontaneous devotee. He spoke sweetly and only as much as necessary. He was very fixed in the truth. His muscular body was beautiful, like Govardhana Hill. The people of the world were witnesses of his innocent behavior. He was like a dike surrounding the ocean of devotional service manifested by his father, Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha. He was an opulence of the Lord, very powerful, and very influential. Therefore many exalted kings and other aristocratic personalities would fall at his lotus feet and offer him respectful obeisances. His heart was absolutely pure. His intelligence was fixed on the supreme Absolute Truth. He was supremely magnanimous and he displayed the limit of serving the Supreme Lord. He was attached to the Lord of Govardhana.

Commentary

Once, a wealthy man came to Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha with the intention of becoming his disciple. Indeed, he brought a huge amount of wealth to give him in charity. Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha tactfully said, “My dear sir, is there any object in this world which causes your mind and body to become overwhelmed with desire? If there is any such object then I will give you initiation.”

The wealthy man replied, “I have no attachment or affection for anything of this world.”

Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha said, “If this is the case then I cannot give you initiation. You had better look for another guru. Love is the principle object on the path of devotional

service. Here, everything is based on love and devotion. The meaning of initiation is to convert the love and attachment for the material world into love and attachment for the Supreme Lord. Since there is no love in your heart then how can you love the Lord, and thus how will you receive the Lord’s loving reciprocation?”

After hearing this, the wealthy man became depressed.

There was a street sweeper named Kānhā, who was a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. His mind was fully absorbed in love for Śrī Śyāmasundara, the ocean of transcendental mellows, the dancing paramour, and the abode of love. Kānhā would stand outside the temple of Śrī Nāthajī and have the *darśana* of the Lord.

One day, the *pūjārī* and other temple workers complained to Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha, and to protect Śrī Nāthajī from the vision of a low-class sweeper, they constructed a wall in front of the temple gate so that Kānhā could no longer have his *darśana*. That night, Lord Śrī Nāthajī, without informing Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha, appeared to the sweeper, Kānhā, in a dream and said, “Go to Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha and tell him that this wall gives the Lord great distress and so he should remove it as soon as possible. The wall obstructs the Lord’s view so that He cannot behold the beauty of Vilchu-kuṇḍa.”

In the morning, Kānhā remembered the dream of the previous night, but he didn’t have the courage to go and convey the Lord’s

message to Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha. He thought, “If I go and tell him this, he might beat me. On the other hand, the Lord will surely support me, and so I don’t know what to do.”

In this way, for three consecutive nights, Śrī Nāthajī appeared to Kānhā in a dream and gave him the same instruction. Finally, Kānhā concluded in his mind, “What can I do in such a situation? It seems that I should go and disclosed this to Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha.”

Therefore, after summoning his courage, Kānhā went to Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha, door and said to the doorman, “Kindly go and tell Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha that the sweeper, Kānhā, wants to talk with him.”

Upon hearing this, the doorman became angry and chastised Kānhā, saying, “You rascal! How dare you hope to speak to Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha?”

Meanwhile, someone (Lord Śrī Nāthajī in the form of a Vrajavāsī) went and informed Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha about how Kānhā wanted to speak to him. Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha said, “Call him at once.”

When Kānhā came inside, Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha said, “Alas! Alas! What do you have to tell me?”

Kānhā replied, “Kindly tell all the other people to leave the room. Then I will tell you why I have come here.”

Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha told everyone to leave the room so that Kānhā could tell his story. When all the people had left the room, Kānhā explained how Śrī Nāthajī had

ordered him in dreams. While hearing the narration, Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha became very happy and said, “Alas! Śrī Nāthajī treats me as His servant and so that is why He has ordered you to tell me all this.”

Then he lovingly said, “If Lord Śyāmasundara has spoken my name then His order must be implemented.”

Thereafter, Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha had the wall dismantled so that Kānhā could have the *darśana* of Śrī Nāthajī. He also arranged for a plate of *mahā-prasāda* to be given to Kānhā every day.

Additional Commentary

Once, the King of Delhi came to Mathurā after making his camp at Aurāṅgābāda. The king asked the local people if they knew of a Hindu mendicant who performed miracles. The people told him about Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha. The king sent his ministers to tell the mendicant to come before the king. Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha came to meet the king of Delhi, riding on a palanquin. The king had arranged a raised platform smeared with cow dung and covered with a blanket and other cloths for Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha to sit on. Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha sprinkled some water on the raised platform and sat down. The King asked, “What is inside this raised platform?”

Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha replied, “Roses.”

When the raised platform was taken down, everyone was surprised to see that it had been filled with roses. Seeing this miracle, the king gave Śrī Gosvāmī Gokulanātha

many plots of grazing land and issued a special order that no one should come to Vraja for hunting animals because it should be an animal preserve.

Text 133

Śrī Banavārīdāsa

Śrī Banavārīdāsa was a great devotee of Lord Śyāmasundara. He was a *rasika* devotee and a *bhajanānandī*. He was extremely knowledgeable regarding devotional literature. He was very strict while performing his *sādhana* and *bhajana*. He was a swan-like personality who took the essence of existence while rejecting everything else as useless. He observed prescribed codes of conduct and was always satisfied within himself. He engaged in working for the welfare of others. He was a reservoir of all godly qualities. Śrī Banavārīdāsa vowed to engage in loving devotional service throughout his entire life. His existence was sanctified and his intentions were honest. His talks were enchanting and always pleasing to hear.

Text 134

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Miśra

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Miśra was born in the Navala family, and by his great accomplishments made his family glorious. He was very fond of serving the devotees and so his house was always filled with devotees of the Supreme Lord. He practiced all the processes of devotional service. Śrī Nārāyaṇa Miśra mastered all the scriptures, including the *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, and historical works so that he can be compared to great sages like Bṛhaspatī, Śukadeva, Sanaka, Vyāsa, and Nārada. His words were just like nectar, very pleasing to hear, and pure like the water of the Gaṅgā. Śrī Nārāyaṇa Miśra's pure fame spread all over the world. Glorious was the mother of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Miśra for giving birth to such a great soul and eloquent speaker of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Additional Commentary

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Miśra was the son of Śrī Navala Kiśora and resided in the village of Pāṭana in Rājasthāna. Later on, he resided in Vraja, but before that, he traveled to all the holy places of pilgrimage in India. Reciting Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was his family tradition and occupation. Some of his family members were envious of him and so they conspired to kill him. They thought that the way Śrī Nārāyaṇa Miśra spent his money for serving the devotees, in the future they would have no chance of inheriting any money or property from him. Thus they administered

poison in his food, but because he accepted the food as *prasāda*, he remained unharmed. Thereafter, they tried to kill him in other ways, but each time they were baffled. Finally, the truth of the matter came out and yet Śrī Nārāyaṇa Mīśra forgave these relatives and instructed them in spiritual life.

Text 135

Śrī Rāghavadāsa

Śrī Rāghavadāsa conquered the formidable influence of the age of Kali and perfectly executed the principles of devotional service to the Lord. Lust, anger, pride, illusion, greed, and envy could not touch him. Just as the sun evaporates water from the ocean and then when needed showers it upon the surface of the earth as rain, for the benefit of people in general, Śrī Rāghavadāsa collected money and food grains from people for the service of saintly persons and guests. Śrī Rāghavadāsa's nature and behavior were flawless. He took a rigid vow to serve saintly persons whenever possible. He boldly accepted the challenge of serving his spiritual master despite all kinds of opposition and difficulties. By the mercy of Śrī Alha and Śrī Rāmarāvala, he fixed his mind on rendering service to the devotees throughout his life, and he was always very submissive to them. In this way, Śrī Rāghavadāsa's firm faith in the Lord continued without deviation throughout his

entire life.

Additional Commentary

Being impressed by his instructions, many men and women came to Śrī Rāghavadāsa. Once, a young *kṣatriya* wanted to test Śrī Rāghavadāsa to see whether he had any attachment to women. The young man approached Śrī Rāghavadāsa and said, "Do you discriminate between male and female?"

Śrī Rāghavadāsa replied, "I do not discriminate between male and female."

The young *kṣatriya* said, "Can you drink this bottle of wine, thinking it to be milk?"

Śrī Rāghavadāsa remembered Lord Rāmacandra and said, "For me wine is indeed milk," and when he said this, the wine transformed into milk. Seeing this miracle, the young *kṣatriya* took instruction from Śrī Rāghavadāsa and became his disciple.

During his last days, Śrī Rāghavadāsa arranged a grand festival in which he fed many saintly persons. While performing *kīrtana* in the midst of the devotees, Śrī Rāghavadāsa left his body and went back to Godhead.

Text 136

Śrī Bāvana

By the mercy of the Lord, and by the strength of his *bhajana*, Śrī Bāvana (Śrī Haridāsa) became great, although he was

of short stature, like Lord Vāmanadeva. He never found any faults in the Vaiṣṇavas, whether big or small. He had great respect for *tilaka*, *kañṭhī-mālā*, and other external characteristics of the Vaiṣṇavas. For that reason, he treated all those who dressed as Vaiṣṇavas as his spiritual master. Like King Janaka, he was in the householder āśrama and yet was supremely renounced. The bumble bee of his mind was intoxicated by drinking the honey from the lotus feet of Śrī Rāmacandra.

Śrī Bāvana enhanced the bright glories of the family of Śrī Yogānanda. He sang of the Lord's transcendental pastimes and characteristics through the entire day and night.

Additional Commentary

Śrī Bāvana's actual name was Śrī Hārīdāsa, and his nickname was Vāmana. He formed a committee from fifty-two villages and traveled to all of them, preaching the cult of devotional service to the Lord. He appeared in a *brāhmaṇa* family and took a vow to serve the devotees throughout his entire life. Simply by seeing someone with *tilaka* and *neck beads*, he would offer his respect, considering him to be a Vaiṣṇava, and serve him with love and devotion. Although he was married, he lived like a renunciate, following in the footsteps of King Janaka. He never found faults in devotees.

Once, an imposter came to his house in the dress of a devotee and began residing with Śrī Bāvana. By his very nature, that person

was a non-devotee, but when he saw his dress, Śrī Bāvana served him very nicely.

One day, when Śrī Bāvana was away from home, the man took one hundred rupees from his wife and disappeared. Later, when the truth of the matter was known, Śrī Bāvana's wife said to him, "You must now stop serving devotees. Imposters come here in the dress of a devotee."

Śrī Bāvana said, "Don't speak like this. Just wait and your money will double."

Admiring Śrī Bāvana's firm faith, the Lord appeared in the dress of a devotee and gave his wife two hundred rupees. From that day onwards, Śrī Bāvana's wife engaged in the service of the devotees with love and devotion.

Text 137

Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa

Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa gave instructions about devotional service to Lord Hari to the tribal and uncivilized men and converted them into pure devotees so that they were as worshipable as the Lord's associates. Just as a neem tree becomes fragrant when the air carrying the fragrance of a sandalwood tree blows over it, Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa purified many godless people by his association, thus delivering them from the darkness of ignorance.

Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa followed the path

traversed by great devotees , such as Śrī Bhaṭṭa and Śrī Harīvyāsa Devācārya. Just as an expert physician cures a severe disease by prescribing bitter medicines coated with sugar, Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa cured the people of this world of the disease of sinful life by instructing them in devotional service to Lord Hari and teaching them to wear *tilaka* and *kañṭhi-mālā*.

Commentary

Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa lived like a king in his palace while he practiced devotional service. Seeing his lifestyle, a passionate person went to him to learn the secret of his knowledge and renunciation. He said, “You give good instructions to others, teaching that only the Supreme Lord is one’s well-wishing friend. You teach that the conditioned souls of this world, which is the creation of the Lord’s external energy, *māyā*, are not one’s real well-wishing friends. And yet, I see that you are enjoying all the facilities offered by *māyā*. This certainly is not proper. You should give up this opulent life and perform *bhajana*.”

Hearing this, Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa gave up all his opulence as if they it were no better than straw in the street. Simply wearing loin cloth and carrying a water pot, he left home and went to a distant mountain cave where he commenced performing his *bhajana*. Indeed, he was very happy to reside in that solitary place.

By the arrangement of Providence, that passionate person came to him in that

mountain cave. Upon seeing his glorious renunciation, he fell at Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa’s feet and begged for forgiveness. He said, “My dear sir, previously, I did not understand your spiritual prowess, but now I have understood everything and so I have come to dedicate my life at your feet.”

Additional Commentary

Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa was an incarnation of Paramā-sakhī. Once, as Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa were conversing with Paramā-sakhī at Puṣkara, many people began to arrive there. When the Lord decided to leave, the *sakhī* grabbed His hand tightly and immediately He transformed into a śālagrāma-śilā.

Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa was born in a Gauḍa *brāhmaṇa* family at Nāranaula, in the city of Jaipur, in the sixteenth century. In his childhood, Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa went to Mathurā and stayed at Nārada-tilā. He took *mantra* initiation from Śrī Harīvyāsa Devācārya and began performing his *bhajana*. He traveled to all the holy places of pilgrimage with his spiritual master. At that time, people were greatly afraid of the evil-minded Yavanas. They would forcibly convert Hindu pilgrims into Yavanas when they visited holy places, such as Dvārakā and Puṣkara.

The pilgrims approached Śrī Harīvyāsa Devācārya and narrated their stories. He said to his disciples, “Is there a genuine disciple of mine who can subdue the *tāṇtrika* power of the Yavanas?”

Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa humbly said, “By your

mercy, this servant is prepared to accomplish this difficult task.”

Thereafter, Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa took a group of devotees and went to the place of the chief Yavana and sat down. The Yavana tried to kill him by the power of *tantra*, but simply by Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa’s glance, he became stunned and frightened. Later on, he fell at Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa’s feet and begged to be excused. In response, Śrī Paraśurāmadāsa made the Yavana promise to never act like that again in this lifetime. From that time onwards, that place known as Paraśurāma’s place. Seeing his powerful influence, the king gave Śrī Paraśurāma dāsa land and wealth to be used in the service of the devotees.

Text 138

Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa

Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa was a reservoir of all good qualities and the bestower of happiness to all living entities. By nature, Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa was virtuous, a friend to all, well-behaved, and always faithful to the instructions of the previous *acāryas*. He was devoid of envy, material desires, and the tendency to perform sinful acts. He was an abode of mercy and compassion. He appeared in this world to firmly establish the worship of the Supreme Lord with faith and devotion. He was like a strong

bridge of religious principles to cross over the dangerous ocean of Kali. He resided in Vṛndāvana and would regularly recitation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was just like nectar. He never caused distress to any living entity.

Commentary

When Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa was residing at home, he composed many songs dedicated to the pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Once, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī heard one of Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa’s songs and was so impressed that he sent to him two devotees with a letter. The two devotees went to Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa’s village and met him.

Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa asked, “Where do you reside?”

The devotees replied, “We live in Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma, which is the topmost place in the entire universe.”

When Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa heard this, he fell to the ground unconscious near a well. It appeared from his condition that he had left his body. Some villagers then informed the two devotees that this unconscious person was Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa. The devotees whispered into the ears of Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa, saying, “We have come from Vṛndāvana and have brought for you a letter from Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī. Upon hearing this, Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa regained consciousness and got up. Indeed, being eager to read the letter, he felt as if he had received a new life.

The devotees gave Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa the letter and he touched it to his head. After reading the letter, he decided to go

to Vṛṇḍāvana with the devotees. When he finally arrived there, he first met Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī. Both of them experienced great pleasure by meeting one another so that tears of love flowed from their eyes.

While residing in Śrī Vṛṇḍāvana, Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa studied many of the devotional literatures compiled by Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī and associated with many saintly devotees. His heart became filled with the ecstatic sentiments associated with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Being absorbed in love of God, he daily recited Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

A pure-hearted man named Kalyāṇa Singh, who resided at Dhaurerā village, which was situated between Mathurā and Vṛṇḍāvana, regularly attended Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa's recitation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He was a Rājaputa from Rājasthāna.

As a result of hearing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, he became detached from worldly life, so much so that he even stopped speaking with and joking with his wife. As a result, his wife became very unhappy. She understood that by the influence of Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa's recitation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, her husband had become indifferent to family life. Such was the devotional prowess of Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa.

Once, a devotee from a faraway place came to hear Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa's recitation. As Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa began speaking, the visiting devotee saw that all the other devotees sitting in the recitation were shedding tears. The visiting devotee thought, "Why are not tears coming from

my eyes?"

That devotee was very anxious and despondent. Finally, he got an idea so that when he came to hear the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam the next day, he brought some red chili powder. When the recitation began, he smeared the chili powder over his eyes. However, someone saw this and at the end of the recitation, he informed Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa of the matter.

When all the members of the audience had left, Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa went and embraced the visiting devotee and said, "If I only had such an intense desire to cry for the Lord then my life would have been successful."

After saying this, Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa actually began to cry. The visiting devotee could thus understand the elevated nature of Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa's devotion.

Once, a thief entered Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa's āśrama in the village of Māṇṭha. He stole many things of value and put them in a bag. Then, because the bag was too heavy, the thief could not lift it. Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa came to him and helped him pick up the bag and put it on his head. Experiencing such magnanimous behavior by the owner of the stolen wealth, the thief was certainly astonished. He asked, "Who are you?" and so Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa informed him of his name.

The thief felt ashamed for stealing and said, "I have made a big mistake. I did not know that this āśrama belongs to you."

The thief put down the bag of stolen goods

and begged for forgiveness. And yet, Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa said, “Never mind. You can take this bag. Don’t worry, because tomorrow morning, ten times this value of goods will arrive here. You need these things to maintain your livelihood.”

When the thief refused to take the stolen goods, Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa said, “You have taken a great risk by stealing. Therefore you should take this as a reward for your labor.”

The thief caught hold of Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa’s feet and surrendered himself as a disciple. He gave up stealing forever.

Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa was a learned scholar of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He knew very well the efficacy of devotional service, which is clearly described in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and for that reason he personally rendered service to the Lord and His devotees.

One day, as Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa was walking around the temple, some wealthy disciples approached him with many gifts. From a distance, one of his disciples said, O Mahārāja, please wash your hands and sit on your āsana. Some devotees are coming, bearing many gifts.”

Upon hearing this, Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa became upset and said to that disciple, “I am only interested in the service of the Lord and I won’t sit on my āsana just to accept gifts.”

Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa’s heart was filled with love for all living entities. He had no desire to enjoy material sense gratification. He constantly drank the nectar of love of God. This was evident from observing his sublime character.

Additional Commentary

Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa was a *brāhmana* in the dynasty of Moudgalya who appeared at Hanumānapura village in Āndhra Pradesh in about the year 1560 Samvat Era. From his childhood, he had the opportunity to associate with the saintly persons who came to his house. As a result, he was a devotee from the very beginning of his life.

Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa was a nectarean reciter of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He was very learned in Sanskrit and Vrajabhāṣā, as is evident from his writings. His worshipable Lord was Śrī Madana-mohana. The appearance festival of Śrī Madana-mohana is observed on Vasanta-pañcamī, which is the fifth day of the waxing moon in the month of Māgha.

Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa discovered this Deity buried in the sand of the Yamunā River’s shore. The *bhajana-kuṭīr* of Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa is situated at Aṭakhambā Mahollā in Vṛṇḍāvana, which is near Śrī Madana-mohana’s temple. His descendants reside there and serve the Deity even today. One can also see at this temple Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa’s wooden shoes and his Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which was published in the year 1607 Samvat Era.

After coming to Vṛṇḍāvana, Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa never returned to his birth place. Rather, his relatives came and stayed in Vṛṇḍāvana.

Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa had two sons, named Śrī Ballabha Rasika and Śrī Yadupati

Bhaṭṭa, whose nickname was Rasikottamaṣa. He was a very learned scholar and compiled a book, *Prema-pattanam*. In this family there appeared a learned scholar in Sanskrit named Śrī Govaradhana Bhaṭṭa, who wrote *Madhukelivallī*, *Rupa-sanātana-stotra*, and *Rādhā-kunḍa-stava*.

Text 139

Cāraṇa Bhakta

These thirteen devotee singers were highly respected because they took complete shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord and sang His glories. They were Śrī Caumukha, Śrī Caurā, Śrī Caṇḍa; Śrī Īśrava dāsa, who sang about the Lord's transcendental qualities; Śrī Karmānanda Dasa, Śrī Kilha; Śrī Alha, who wrote authorized literature; Śrī Mādava, who resided in Mathurā; the simple-hearted devotee, Śrī Jivānanda; Śrī Simbā, Śrī Dudā, Śrī Nārāyaṇadāsa, and the soft-hearted Śrī Māṇḍana. All these devotee singers were very expert in composing songs and singing the eighty-four *ragas*.

Śrī Caumukha

Another name for Śrī Caumukha was Caumī. Once, as he was traveling to Dvārakā in a bullock cart so that he could have the Lord's *darśana*, one of the bulls died and

so he became anxious. Suddenly, a bull appeared as if from nowhere and stood by the cart. Śrī Caumukha yoked the bull to the cart and resumed his journey to Dvārakā. After arriving at Dvārakā, that bull suddenly disappeared. Thus Śrī Caumukha could understand that it was a display of the Lord's mercy and nothing else. And yet, he was very unhappy that he had engaged the Supreme Lord as a bull to pull his cart.

That night, in the dream, the Supreme Lord spoke to Śrī Caumukha, saying, "If I am not merciful to My devotees then who will worship Me?"

Once, as Śrī Caumukha was worshiping the Lord, the king sent some men to summon him to his palace. He was unwilling to go until his worship was completed and so he went to the king a bit late. Because of this, he was thrown out of the royal court. That night, the Lord spoke to the king in a dream, saying, "Śrī Caumukha is My devotee and so tomorrow you should call for him. If you do not do this, you will meet with ruination. The next day, the king requested Śrī Caumukha to come and give him his *darśana* at the royal court.

Śrī Caṇḍa

Another name of Śrī Caṇḍa was Cuṇḍājī. He was the father of the Śrī Mādhava dāsa mentioned in this verse. Śrī Caṇḍa was a staunch devotee of Lord Śrī Caturabhuja of Mertā. In consideration of his devotion to

the Lord, he was blessed with a son of the caliber of Śrī Mādhava dāsa.

❀ Śrī Īśvara dāsa ❀

Śrī Īśvara dāsa was a professional singer of the Rohaḍiyā branch. He was born in the year 1565 Samvat Era in the village of Bhadreśa, near Jodhapura. His father's name was Sūjā and his mother's name was Amarbāi. When his wife, Devalabāi, died prematurely, he married again, to Rājabāi, the daughter of Absūrā of Jāmanagara. His spiritual master was Śrī Pītāmbara Bhāṭṭa.

In the early part of his life, Śrī Īśvara dāsa sang the glories of the king. Once, as he sang some poetry in praise of the King of Jāmanagara, the king became very pleased with him. On the other hand, Śrī Īśvara dāsa's spiritual master, Śrī Pītāmbara Bhāṭṭa, was not happy with this, but felt disappointed. As a result, Śrī Īśvara dāsa became envious and decided to kill Śrī Pītāmbara. He went to Śrī Pītāmbara's house and hid himself. Then, he heard Śrī Pītāmbara say to his wife, "Śrī Īśvara dāsa writes nice poems, but he never writes poems glorifying the Supreme Lord. If he were to sing in glorification of the Lord, his life would be successful."

Śrī Īśvara dāsa came out from hiding and fell at the feet of Śrī Pītāmbara Bhāṭṭa. From that time onwards, he only sang in glorification of the Supreme Lord, and indeed he became a great devotee.

Once, Śrī Īśvara dāsa traveled to Dvārakā with his uncle. On the way, they stopped somewhere to cook. As he had no food, Śrī Īśvara dāsa simply ignited a fire and began boiling water. His uncle asked, "There is no rice or *dāl* and so why are you boiling water uselessly?"

Śrī Īśvara dāsa said, "The Supreme Lord will certainly send something for us to cook. The Lord then came there in the form of a forest-dwelling boy and gave Śrī Īśvara dāsa all the ingredients necessary for a sumptuous meal. Finally, when he arrived at Dvārakā, the Deity's curtain was closed. Śrī Īśvara dāsa was very eager to have the Lord's *darśana* and so the Lord arranged for the curtain to be opened early.

Once, Śrī Īśvara dāsa wanted to go to Dvārakā for having the *darśana* of the Lord, and so he dove into the ocean but did not drown. He traveled within the water and arrived at the gate of Śrī Dvārakādiśa's temple. He sat down there with a vow to fast until death if the gate would not open.

The Lord said to Śrī Īśvara dāsa, "Whatever wealth you have accumulated, you should use in the service of the devotees. Later, I will come to your house and give you My *darśana*."

Śrī Īśvara dāsa returned home and utilized his wealth as advised by the Lord. Once, as he was engaged in serving the devotees, the Lord came and gave him His *darśana*.

Śrī Īśvara dāsa wrote many books, the principal one being *Hari-rasa*. Even today, his *bhajana-kuṭīr* and wooden slippers can be

found in Bhadreśa village. He left this world at the age of eighty. He was seen riding on a horse and entering the ocean, and he never returned.

❀ Śrī Karamānanda ❀

Śrī Karamānanda's words were imbued with so much potency and devotion that simply by hearing them, a hard-hearted person's heart would melt. Having fixed-up attachment to the devotional service of the Lord, Śrī Karamānanda left home and traveled to many holy places of pilgrimage, carrying a bag with his worshipable Lord and a staff. Wherever he rested, he would hang the bag on that staff.

Once, he stopped at a place and kept his Lord hanging on the staff. Because of his absorption in the internal worship of the Lord, he forgot to take the staff out of the ground, simply taking the bag and departing. When he arrived at another place and wanted to keep his Lord hanging on the staff, he remembered how he had left it behind. When he complained to the Lord, saying, "Why didn't You remind me of my staff?" the Lord, who fulfills the desires of His devotees, immediately stretched His hands and brought the stick. Śrī Karamānanda was preached the glories of devotion to the Lord wherever he went.

❀ Śrī Kilha and Alha ❀

Śrī Priyādāsa says, "Now let me describe the pleasant topics of the two brothers, Śrī Kilha and Śrī Alha."

The elder brother, Śrī Kilha, was detached from material enjoyment. He did not eat meat or drink wine. He constantly meditated on the beauty and qualities of the Supreme Lord, and he expressed his appreciation in his words and poems. The two brothers' hearts were filled with devotion for the Supreme Lord.

Śrī Kilha's younger brother, Śrī Alha, ate and drank without discrimination and enjoyed all the pleasurable things of this world. He sang the glories of various kings, but still, he was very faithful and obedient to his elder brother. He always respected his brother and was humble in his presence.

One day, Śrī Kilha said to his brother, "All varieties of material enjoyment are illusory. Your life is being spent uselessly in the activities of sense gratification. You had better come with me to Dvārakā and have the *darśana* of Śrī Dvārakādiśa."

Śrī Alha was always obedient and so he went with his brother to Dvārakā. When they entered the temple, something wonderful happened. Śrī Kilha recited a prayer before the Lord which he had composed. Hearing his recitation, Śrī Dvārakādiśa happily ordered His *pūjārī* to give His garland to Śrī Alha. Being so ordered, the *pāṇḍa* took the garland and went and offered it to Śrī Alha. However, Śrī Alha said, "This is meant for

my elder brother and so give it to him. I am not qualified to accept it.”

The *pūjārī* did not offer the garland to Śrī Kilha, despite being requested by his brother, Alhaji. The *pūjārī* said, “The Lord ordered me to offer the garland to you, and not to your elder brother.”

Saying this, the *pūjārī* offered the garland to Śrī Alha, but seeing this, Śrī Kilha felt so insulted that, due to great pride and the anger born of that pride, he jumped into the ocean. After diving into the water, Śrī Kilha came to a divine land. With great happiness he walked in that beautiful abode, but he could not forget the insult caused by his brother’s receiving the Lord’s garland. Indeed, the thought of this caused him much grief.

After walking for awhile in that divine land, Śrī Kilha met the Lord’s associates, who welcomed him and took him to their master, and so he felt great happiness and satisfaction. Finally, when Śrī Kilha met Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Dvārakā, he felt so ecstatic that he completely forgot about the distress of humiliation caused by his brother’s receiving the garland.

Thereafter, Śrī Kilha sat down to honor *prasāda*. By the order of the Lord, two plates were placed before him. Śrī Kilha asked, “Who is this second plate for?”

The Lord said, “This one is for your brother Alha. He is very dear to Me.”

When Śrī Kilha heard that the second plate was meant for his brother, his nectarian *prasāda* became distasteful, like poison. The sorrow born of humiliation which was

troubling him came back. Seeing this, the Lord began narrating the history of Śrī Alha’s previous life.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said, “Your brother was a prince in his previous life. He became detached from the worldly life of opulence and sense gratification and left home and went to the forest. In the forest he fixed his mind on Me and performed My *bhajana*.

“Meanwhile, another king went to the forest to hunt and there he met this prince. By his bad association, the prince became attracted to material enjoyment. I thus gave him a human body so that he can enjoy worldly happiness to his full satisfaction and then, after realizing the uselessness of material enjoyment, he can become freed from material attachment.

“Because of being separated from you, your younger brother has stopped eating and drinking. In that condition, he will not be able to maintain his life very long. Therefore you should quickly return and pacify him.”

After saying this, the Lord placed some *prasāda* in Śrī Kilha’s hands. Śrī Kilha returned home with the marks of a conch shell and disk decorating his body. He completely forgot the insult, just as one forgets a dream. He now had great love and affection for his brother.

Meanwhile, when Śrī Alha heard that his brother was returning home after having the Lord’s *darśana* of the transcendental Dvārakā, he went to greet him. When he saw his brother, he fell down to the ground

to offer obeisances while his eyes became filled with tears.

Śrī Kilha gave him the *prasāda* given by the Lord. He also described his experience of Dvārakā Purī, and the story of his brother's previous life. From that time onwards, Śrī Alha gave up all attachment for the materialistic way of life, and he went to reside in Vṛṇḍāvana. In this way, both brothers became great devotees of the Lord and servants of the Lord's devotees.

❀ Śrī Nārāyāna dāsa ❀

Śrī Nārāyāna dāsa, who was praised even by exalted saintly persons, was a descendant of Śrī Alha. He was the youngest of his father's sons. His other brothers produced food grains and collected wealth, but Śrī Nārāyāna dāsa did not earn anything. He was only spending money.

One day, his brother's wife offered him cold food. Because of this, Śrī Nārāyāna dāsa felt very sad. He said to her, "You must cook fresh food and give it to me."

At this, she became angry and said, "Are you Alha Bābā that I will prepare fresh food and offer it to you? Go to Dvārakā and sing poetry before Lord Dvārakādhīśa and get something from Him. Then only will I cook fresh food for you."

She teased him like this, but Śrī Nārāyāna dāsa took her words to heart and immediately left home. He became a great devotee of

Śrī Dvārakādhīśa, just like Śrī Alha. The Supreme Lord became very pleased with him, for after all, the Lord is controlled by the love of His devotees.

❀ Śrī Pṛithvīrāja ❀

Śrī Kalyāṇa Singh's son, Śrī Pṛithvīrāja, was expert in writing literature, both in the Saṅskṛta and Hindi languages. He wrote many songs, ślokaś, *dohāś*, and poetry. In all of his literary works, he described the glories of Lord Hari. He was eager to act for the welfare of others. Just as a bee is attracted to honey, Śrī Pṛithvīrāja gave great importance to literary works and kept their teachings within his heart. His book, *Kṛṣṇa-rukamiṇī-velī*, became very popular. While reading this book, one understands that he had the special blessings of Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning.

Śrī Pṛithvīrāja was the King of Bikānera and a great devotee poet. He had great love and devotion for the service of the Supreme Lord. He was so much detached from family life that he did not recognize his own queen while in the temple.

Once, he traveled to a foreign country. While there, he sat down to worship his Lord within his mind. But although he tried very hard, he could not have the *darśana* of the Deity that was worshiped in his temple at home. His regulative principle was that he would not eat anything without first performing his *bhajana* and seeing the Deity

within. In this way, three days passed and still he did not have the *darśana* of the Lord. On the fourth day, Śrī Prīthvīrāja finally had the *darśana* of the Deity in his temple and so he worshiped Him with great happiness.

Śrī Prīthvīrāja sent a letter from that foreign country to his home, writing that for three days he had not had the *darśana* of the Deity in his temple. When he received the answer, he was very pleased, for it was written that the temple was being cleansed and repaired, and so the Lord was taken to another place.

Please hear another story about Śrī Prīthvīrāja. He made a vow out of love of God that he would leave his body at Mathurā. When the king asked him about this, he said, “Six months from now, I will die on the shore of the Yamunā while watching a white crow.”

Just to test Śrī Prīthvīrāja, the king sent him to Kābula to engage in a fierce battle. Śrī Prīthvīrāja was a powerful king and had no personality weaknesses. He was fully self-confident and was not disturbed by the influence of time. Śrī Prīthvīrāja knew his duration of life. When he saw that his lifespan was about to come to an end, he prepared for his next life.

The Lord wanted to enable Śrī Prīthvīrāja to make good his vow and so He appeared to him as a small boy and reminded him of his future. Śrī Prīthvīrāja’s body manifested his devotional sentiments. After hearing from the boy, Śrī Prīthvīrāja departed on a female camel for Mathurā. In Mathurā, bathed in

the Yamunā and gave charity to the local *brāhmaṇas*. He then sat down peacefully and began meditating on the Supreme Lord, and soon thereafter, he gave up his life. When the Emperor heard about this, he was impressed and profusely praised Śrī Prīthvīrāja.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Prīthvīrāja was the younger brother of Rāi Singh, the king of Bikānera and son of Kalyāṇāmala. He was born on the first day of the waning moon in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa in the year 1606 Samvat Era. His mother’s name was Sonagaḍī. Śrī Prīthvīrāja was a devotee of the Lord, a poet, a religious-minded person, a valiant warrior, and a worshiper of Goddess Sarasvatī. His first marriage was to the daughter of Hararāja Singh, the King of Jaisalamera. Her name was Lālānde.

Śrī Rāi Singh was the commander-in-chief of the Emperor’s army. On his order, Śrī Prīthvīrāja had to become a member of Akbar’s royal court. Otherwise, it was completely against his nature and will to act in that way. In spite of taking part in Akbar’s assembly, he protected the Hindu religion in all respects.

Once, Rāi Singh ordered him to go to the Emperor’s court and so Śrī Prīthvīrāja said to his wife, “I will return home within six months.” But seeing his heroism, prowess, cleverliness, and literary expertise, the Emperor did not allow him to return to Bikānera. As a result, his wife died after six months due to separation from her husband.

When Śrī Prīthvīrāja returned home, he became like a madman because of the death of his wife.

Thereafter, the ministers arranged for his second marriage with the second daughter of Hararāja, named Cāpānde. However, after spending some days enjoying his material opulence, Śrī Prīthvīrāja became detached and so lamented, “I have forgotten the glories of Lord Gopāla and have uselessly praised others. I have misused my intelligence and my words.”

Thinking like this, Śrī Prīthvīrāja traveled to many holy places, associated with saintly persons, and finally surrendered to the Supreme Lord. When he came to Mathurā, he asked the *caturvedī brāhamaṇas* about who was the qualified devotee who could give him guidance and saintly association. They said that there were many saintly persons in Vraja, among which Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha of Gokula was most famous. Śrī Prīthvīrāja went to Gokula and had the *darśana* of Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha and accepted initiation from him. He was blessed by being engaged in the service of Śrī Bālakṛṣṇa, and he also received the benediction that he could leave his body at will. Śrī Prīthvīrāja returned home and described everything to his wife and thereafter, began worshiping Śrī Bālakṛṣṇa. All of his family members became devotees.

❀ Text 141 ❀

❀ Śrī Simbā ❀

Once, a sinful *mleccha* named Ajiza Khan set fire to the city of Dvārakā. At that time, Raṇachoda Śrī Dvārakādhiṣa summoned Saṅgana's son, Śrī Simbā. Generally, people sacrifice their lives for attaining wealth, land, rule of a country, and for advancing in spiritual life. The powerful *kṣatriya* devotee, Śrī Simbā, annihilated the army of the Yavanas in front of the four-armed form of Śrī Dvārakānātha, and then dedicated his life, body, and mind for His service. In this way, this devotee from the Rāṭhora family enhanced the reputation of his ancestors. He saved the city of Dvārakā from destruction and protected the lives of its inhabitants.

❀ Commentary ❀

The king of the Bhīla tribe and the son of Śrī Saṅgana, Śrī Simbā, was a dear devotee of the Lord. Once, a Yavana named Ajiz Khan set fire to the city of Dvārakā. In that crisis, the Lord of Dvārakā summoned Śrī Simbā for assistance. The fact is that whenever devotees are in danger and they pray to the Lord, the Lord gives them all protection. But in this case, the Lord requested His devotee, Śrī Simbā, to give protection to His devotees.

Hearing that he was summoned by the Lord, Śrī Simbā felt great joy. The Yavana king, Ajiz Khan, had attacked Dvārakā from

all sides with his army and had set fire to the city. When Śrī Simbā received this news, he took a small army and fought valiantly with the Yavana king, cutting into pieces the soldiers of his army. He also protected the Deity, as well as the city of Dvārakā. After this heroic act, Śrī Simbā dedicated his life to the service of the Lord's lotus feet. He became a great devotee of Śrī Dvārakādhīśa and rendered service to Him in various ways.

❀ **Text 142** ❀

❀ **Śrīmatī Ratnāvati** ❀

Śrīmatī Ratnāvati was the daughter of Sunakhājita, who resided in the city of Āmera, near Jaipura. She was endowed with all good qualities and a descendent of the great devotee king, Pṛthavīrāja. She was an exalted devotee who continuously engaged in hearing discussions of the Supreme Lord and chanting His holy names. She took great pleasure in serving the devotees and so there was always a crowd of devotees at her residence. She worshiped the Deity of child Kṛṣṇa known as Nandalāla. She proudly waved the flag of devotional service to the Lord by always meditating on His lotus feet. She detached herself from the association of her husband because he repeatedly obstructed her rendering of service. Therefore she rejected him while never giving up her vow to serve the Supreme Lord and His devotees.

The King of Āmera was Māna Singh, and his younger brother was Mādho Singh, whose wife was Śrīmatī Ratnāvati. She had a maidservant who was always there to assist her in her service. The maidservant regularly chanted the Lord's holy names with love and devotion. By hearing the Lord's names chanted with love and devotion, Queen Śrīmatī Ratnāvati also became devoted to the Supreme Lord. The maidservant would sometimes chant Navala-kiśora, sometimes she would chant Nanda-kiśora, and sometimes Śrī Vṛndāvana-candra, and while chanting, tears would flow from her eyes. After hearing such ecstatic chanting, the queen also became a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, deciding to also chant and hear the holy names of the Lord. The queen could understand that the maidservant was an ordinary woman, for she had great affection for the Supreme Lord.

One day, Śrīmatī Ratnāvati asked her maidservant, "Who is it that you call every now and then? Who is that person? I am attracted to hearing His name. I also wish to chant His name just like you."

Saying this, both the queen and the maidservant became filled with devotional sentiments as tears flowed from their eyes. The maidservant replied, "O Queen, just forget about this and enjoy the opulent life available for you. The cause of my present condition is that I was blessed by a great devotee. It is for this reason that I feel separation from my worshipable Lord."

Later, the maidservant described the path

of devotional service and love of God, being so requested by the queen. She also told the queen about the great devotees residing in Vraja-dhāma. This had a huge impact on the queen, so much so that she no longer allowed the maidservant to serve her, but instead kept her in the palace as a companion. Indeed, the queen soon accepted the maidservant as her spiritual master.

Queen Śrīmatī Ratnāvati enjoyed hearing about the beautiful form and qualities of the Supreme Lord. As a result, she soon developed an intense desire to have *darśana* of the Lord. She wondered, “How can it be possible for me to have the *darśana* of the Lord?” She would always think of this and weep.

Finally, one day, the queen said to her maidservant, “Please devise some means so that I can have the *darśana* of the Lord. Only then will I be able to sustain my life, for He has captured my heart.”

The maidservant said, “It is very difficult to attain the Lord’s *darśana*. Indeed, just to attain His *darśana*, great kings and saintly persons gave up all kinds of material happiness and simply rolled in the dust of holy places of pilgrimage. And yet, they were unable to attain the Lord’s *darśana*. The Supreme Lord is only controlled by pure love. Therefore, you should render service to the Lord with love and devotion. Offer Him varieties of dry fruits and sweets. I am sure that by your service attitude, the Lord will bestow His mercy upon you.

Accepting the instructions of her

maidservant, Queen Śrīmatī Ratnāvati prepared a Deity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa of blue sapphire. The Deity looked especially enchanting because the Lord personally appeared in the form of that Deity. The queen gave up all other engagements to serve the Deity. The queen matched the mood of the maidservant and traversed the path shown by her. She offered varieties of foodstuffs to the Lord with love and devotion. She was always prepared to serve her Lord throughout the entire day and night.

At night, when Śrīmatī Ratnāvati slept, the Lord would appear to her in a dream and gave her His *darśana*. The queen was fully absorbed in love of God. She would decorate the Deity with opulent dresses and ornaments every day. There is no limit to the beauty of the Lord, and there was no limit to the ways she served Him. Even if someone performs thousands of sacrifices and attains liberation material existence, it is still not possible for him to develop pure love for the Lord.

Śrīmatī Ratnāvati had an intense desire to attain the *darśana* of the Lord. And she would regularly ask her maidservant how this could be attained. The maidservant advised the queen, saying, “You should construct a residence for visiting devotees. Post guards on all the roads with the instruction that if they see a devotee, they should respectfully bring him to that house. Then you should wash the devotee’s feet and request them stay in that residence. Cook varieties of foodstuffs and personally serve the devotees.

When the devotees honor *prasāda*, you should affectionately gaze at them from a distance. By these acts, you will be able to see Lord Śyāmasundara.”

Following these instructions, Śrīmatī Ratnāvati constructed a house for the devotees. Soon thereafter, devotees from various places began arriving there. The queen served them and had their *darśana*. In this way, some days passed.

One day, a group of devotees arrived who were fully absorbed in the mood of Vrajarasa. They sang songs in glorification of the eternal pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. As they sang, tears flowed from their eyes.

When Śrīmatī Ratnāvati saw these saintly devotees, she could not restrain herself. She said to her maidservant, “I want to approach these saintly devotees and touch their lotus feet.”

The maidservant said, “You are a queen and so you cannot go out of the palace.”

The queen said, “I have given up my position as a queen. I am a servant of the Lord’s devotees. I cannot control myself. I want to surpass the boundaries of worldly etiquette and social prestige and take advantage of the devotees’ good association. I have already considered this very carefully. The essence of all happiness is to relish the beauty and sweetness of the Lord’s transcendental form.”

Finally, the queen went to the devotees and offered her obeisances. With the permission of the devotees, the queen

prepared varieties of foodstuffs and offered them the *prasāda*. By rendering this service to the Lord’s devotees, Śrīmatī Ratnāvati was finally blessed by the Lord’s *darśana*. Although she had to face stiff opposition from her relatives, she passed all the tests while continuing to render service to the Supreme Lord.

Once, as King Māna Singh and his brother, Mādho Singh, were returning home after gaining victory in the battle of Kābula, their boat began to sink. The elder brother, Māna Singh, said to his younger brother, “What can we do to save our lives?”

Mādho Singh said, “Śrīmatī Ratnāvati is a great devotee of the Lord. Since we are in a danger, we should simply remember her and her worshippable Lord.”

Thereafter, by the mercy of the Lord and the queen’s devotional prowess, the boat did not sink and so the kings’ lives were protected. Both brothers were exceedingly happy and grateful. Māna Singh wanted to first see the devotee queen after returning home. When the two brothers arrived, they first went and had the *darśana* of the queen and the Deity of the Lord. Śrī Priyādāsa says that the beautiful subjects of Śrīmatī Ratnāvati have captured his heart.

❀ Text 143 ❀

❀ Śrī Jagannātha Pārikh ❀

Śrī Rāmadāsa's son, Śrī Jagannātha Pārikh, displayed the limit of practicing Vaiṣṇava-dharma. He observed the principles of devotional service established by Śrī Rāmānujācārya and firmly held in his heart his vow of surrender to the Lord.

Śrī Jagannātha Pārikh underwent all *saṁskārās* performed by Vaiṣṇavas. He realized the truth of the Supreme Lord, and like a swan, he accepted the essence and rejected that which was useless. He accepted the path of devotional service to the Supreme Lord and rejected the path of material enjoyment. His nature and behavior were just like that of a great sage. He was a brilliant devotee of the Śrī *sampradāya*. He was a practitioner of loving devotional service. By the mercy of his spiritual master, Śrī Puruṣottamācārya, he put iron armor on on his body and the armor of devotional service on his consciousness. In this way, he protected both his material and spiritual bodies and was thus able to observe the etiquette of Vaiṣṇava-dharma.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Once, five or six *brāhmaṇa* devotees of Śrī Rāma were sitting and discussing the glories of the Lord. A worshiper of the goddess then came there and began arguing against engagement in the devotional service of Śrī

Rāma. The *brāhmaṇas* were not expert in scriptural debate.

Śrī Jagannātha Pārikh then came and defeated the goddess worshiper in a scriptural debate. The goddess worshiper then attempted to kill Śrī Jagannātha Pārikh with his tantric *mantras*, but because of the prowess of his pure devotion, he could not harm him. Instead, that worshiper of the goddess became a devotee.

Another time, Śrī Jagannātha Pārikh met some thieves while traveling who wanted to kill him and steal his wealth. Although they tried to kill him with their swords, Śrī Jagannātha Pārikh was unharmed. When the thieves understood his spiritual prowess, they gave up their stealing business and became his follower.

❀ Text 144 ❀

❀ Śrī Mathurā dāsa ❀

Śrī Mathurā dāsa continuously chanted the holy names of the Supreme Lord. It is because of this that the *tantric mantras* and illusory tricks of the tantrics never affected him. His behavior was pure, he was satisfied with whatever he received, he was friendly to everyone, and he was well-behaved. Just as a lamp dissipates the darkness and reveals everything, so heart was illuminated by knowledge of the Absolute Truth.

Śrī Mathurā dāsa had firm faith in the

Supreme Lord and was empowered by Him. He carried a pitcher of water for the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He had complete faith in the words of his spiritual master, Śrī Vardhamāna. Śrī Mathurā dāsa strictly carried out his guru's instructions and never transgressed his order.

❀ Commentary ❀

Śrī Mathurā dāsa resided in the village of Tijāre, where he preached the cult of devotional service to his fellow inhabitants. Once, a magician in the dress of a devotee came to Tijāre village. He made a show of serving his śālagrāma-śīla. His trick was that his śālagrāma would move like a puppet on its throne. Many people gathered to see this miracle.

Śrī Mathurā dāsa had many disciples and followers, and they thought that this magician must be a perfect devotee because the Lord appeared to be under his control. They went and told Śrī Mathurā dāsa about the magician, saying, "Everyone is impressed and happy to see such a pure devotee. You should also go to see him."

Śrī Mathurā dāsa understood that this person was not a devotee, but a hypocrite. He said, "Of I go to see him then his magic will not work and so he will feel sad. Considering this, I will not go."

All of Śrī Mathurā dāsa's disciples requested him again and again to go see the magician, and so he finally went and stood before the so-called devotee. When the magician tried to make the śālagrāma-śīla sway, it did not

move. As a result, the magician felt very unhappy, understanding that this must be due to the influence of the devotee who had come before him. He thought, "This person blocks my ability to perform magic and so I will kill him by uttering my *tantric mantras*."

Although the magician tried again and again, all his *mantras* proved useless before Śrī Mathurā dāsa's devotion. On the contrary, the magician fell to the ground unconscious so that everyone thought that he had died. Finally, Śrī Mathurā dāsa was merciful to him by describing the glories of devotional service as the path of true righteousness.

❀ Additional commentary ❀

Whenever Śrī Mathurā dāsa performed *kīrtana*, many people would come and join him and offer him varieties of gifts. And yet, Śrī Mathurā dāsa would not accept anything. Rather, he would have someone utilize those things in the service of the Supreme Lord and His devotees.

Once, as Śrī Mathurā dāsa was chanting in his dreams, one of his servants came and offered him a gift and but he refused to accept it. Indeed, he chastised the servant for interrupting him in this way. Thus, Śrī Mathurā dāsa showed that he did not take anything in exchange for performing *kīrtana* even in his dreams. He was a disciple of Śrī Vardhamāna and appeared at the end of the twelfth century.

❀ **Text 145** ❀❀ **Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dāsa, the dancer** ❀

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dāsa's love for the Supreme Lord increased day by day. He would regularly sing and dance in front of the Supreme Lord. He was so absorbed in his singing that he would derive great pleasure from each and every word and syllable. He was attached to Lord Madana-mohana and always sang of His glories. Many people sing and dance in this world, but no one could become absorbed in love of God while dancing and singing like Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dāsa. Sometimes, while singing, he would become stunned and stand like a painting. He had the auspicious *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the village of Haḍiyā Sarāī, which is twelve miles east of Prayāga, he left his body in the presence of the villagers and attained the spiritual abode.

❀ **Commentary** ❀

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dāsa had an unbreakable rule that he would only sing and dance in front of the Lord and not anyone else. He never danced and chanted to gain name and fame, or to please worldly people. Keeping this vow in his heart, he traveled to many places to preach the cult of devotional service and have the *darśana* of the devotees residing there.

Once, while traveling like this, he arrived at Haḍiyā Sarāī village and remained there.

It was his practice to dance before his Deity every day, and people highly praised his dancing and singing. Hearing of his fame, the local Yavana ruler, Mīra, called for him, saying, "We invite great personalities and devotees of the Lord and so kindly come to my place. I have a great desire to meet saintly persons."

When this message was received by Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dāsa, he felt that he had been put into great difficulty and he was confused about what he should do. Some people assured him that Mīra Sāhaba was very eager to hear his singing and see his dancing.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dāsa thought, "I have made a vow to sing and dance only in front of the Lord and so how can I sing for the pleasure of someone else? How can I set up my Deity in front of the Yavanas?"

Thinking like this, he got an Idea and then went to the royal court of Mīra Sāhaba. There he placed a *tulasī* bead on a throne, because he knew very well that *tulasī* is non-different from the Lord. Then in front of the *tulasī* bead, he performed a beautiful dance program. Mīra Sāhaba sat on one side and Śrī Tulasī was on the other side. While dancing and singing, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dāsa did not even look at the king, for he continuously gazed at the *tulasī* bead, absorbed in thinking of her beauty and that of Lord Śyāmasundara. Indeed, he completely forgot about himself. He dedicated his life to the Lord in such a way that on that stage he sacrificed his life for the pleasure of the Lord. The Lord reciprocated by accepting the gift of His

devotee's sacrifice.

Śrī Priyādāsa says that he admires this kind of sacrifice and dedication.

❀ Text 146 ❀

❀ Charitable devotees ❀

These devotees of the Lord were highly charitable because they distributed the transcendental glories of the Supreme Lord by means of their divine instructions. They were Śrī Bohīta, Rāmagopāla, Kumbaravara, Govinda, Māṇḍila, Chītasvāmī, Yasvanta, Gadādhara, Anantānanda, Harinābha Mīśra, Dīnadāsa, Vachapāla, Kanhara, Gosū, Rāmadāsa, Nārada, Śyāma, Harīnārāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa Jīvana, Jana Bhagavāna, Śyāmadāsa, and Bihārīdāsa. These devotees sang of the glorious names, qualities, and pastimes of the Supreme Lord, thus distributing the nectar of love of God to everyone.

❀ Śrī Bohīta ❀

Śrī Bohīta chanted the holy names of the Lord every day without fail. He was like a ship for taking the devotees of the Lord across the ocean of material existence. A ghost lived next to his āśrama and would listen to his chanting every day. One night, as the moon was shining brightly, the ghost began playing with some boys. The boys

tried to catch him but they could not even touch the ghost. The boys then went and told Śrī Bohīta about this.

Śrī Bohīta said, "Catch the ghost by his hair and bring him to me."

The young boys did that. Śrī Bohīta asked the ghost, "Who are you?"

The ghost replied, "In my last life I was a Rājapūta. I became a ghost because I used to steal from others, I indulged in gambling, and I killed my innocent wife. Please deliver me."

Śrī Bohīta instructed the ghost about chanting the holy names of the Lord, and also gave him the Lord's *caraṇāmṛta*. In this way, the ghost was delivered.

Śrī Bohīta was a resident of Suhelā village. His native place was Makarāpura (Karnāla). This is the place where he left this world. His *samādhi* is still present in this village.

❀ Harinābha Mīśra ❀

Śrī Harinābha Mīśra was a very sober, well-behaved devotee. He observed the prescribed codes of conduct, served saintly persons, and imparted good instructions to others. By his divine instructions, many persons were benefited.

Once, one of his *brāhmaṇa* disciples came to him and said, "My son has become an atheist."

Śrī Harinābha Mīśra said, "Send your son to my discourse and his mind will become

purified.”

However, the boy refused to come. Another day, by the will of the Lord, as the boy was passing his āśrama, Śrī Harinābha Mīśra sprinkled a few drops of water that had been empowered by *mantras* upon his head. As a result, the boy's mind and intelligence became purified and he started to attend the spiritual discourses. That boy became a great devotee of Lord Viṣṇu.

❁ Śrī Bachapāla ❁

Śrī Bachapāla was a staunch devotee of the Supreme Lord. Once, the Yamadūtas came and scared his mother. Indeed, they were prepared to take her away to the abode of Yamarāja. At that time, Śrī Bachapāla began loudly chanting the holy names of the Lord. When the Yamadūtas heard the Lord's holy names, they fled. Then the Lord's associates came and took Śrī Bachapāla's mother away in a celestial airplane. His mother narrated all these incidents to everyone and then went back to the spiritual world. In such ways, Śrī Bachapāla delivered many people by performing *kīrtana* and speaking about the glories of the Lord.

❁ Śrī Chītasvāmī ❁

Śrī Chītasvāmī is said to be an incarnation of Śrī Subala-sakhā. He was a great poet

born in a *caturvedī brāhmaṇa* family of Mathurā in 1572. He was the leader of his four friends. He would accept *dakṣiṇā* from the pilgrims who visited Mathura, and sometimes he would forcibly make them pay a fee. Therefore he was also called Guṇḍā Pāṇḍā.

Once, as the four friends were talking, one of them suggested, “Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha is staying at Gokula and whoever goes to him becomes his disciples. Let us go and test him.”

So they went to Gokula carrying a rotten coconut and some useless coins. While the others friends sat outside, Śrī Chītasvāmī went inside, where he saw not only Viṭṭhalanātha, but also the Supreme Lord. His heart was transformed by this vision. Śrī Chītasvāmī's friends understood that that there had been some miraculous effect on him.

After returning to Mathurā, Śrī Chītasvāmī wrote many songs in glorification of the Supreme Lord. Śrī Chītasvāmī left his body and entered the eternal abode of the Lord at Pucharī village in Govardhana in the year 1642 Samvat Era.

❁ Śrī Bihārīdāsa ❁

Śrī Bihārīdāsa's father, Śrī Mītrasena, was a high official in the court of the King of Delhi, but because he had no children, he was always very sad. He had a close friend

named Caturabhuja, who said, “I received a son by the blessings of Śrī Svāmī Haridāsa and so you should go and have his *darśana* and ask for his blessings.”

Śrī Mitrasena did this, and by the blessings of Śrī Svāmījī, he received a son on the third day of the waxing moon in the month of Śrāvaṇa. He named this son Śrī Bihārīdāsa.

After the death of his father, Śrī Bihārīdāsa was appointed by the king to the same post. Once, he had to accompany the military commander when he invaded Assam. Upon seeing the fierce battle and the killing of so many soldiers, Śrī Bihārīdāsa became very unhappy and decided to give up his service to the Yavana king. For this purpose, he cut off one of his hands and was thus released from his duties. He then returned to Vṛṇḍāvana and took shelter of Svāmī Haridāsa. Immediately, the severed hand was rejoined to his body.

On the order of Svāmījī, Śrī Bihārīdāsa took initiation from Viṭṭhala Vipuladeva. After writing many books, he left his body at the age of ninety eight and entered the eternal pastimes of the Lord.

❀ Text 147 ❀

❀ Devotees detached to worldly life ❀

Devotees who are completely freed from the influence of the material energy are my maintainers. These devotees are Śrī

Uddhava, Śrī Rāmarenu, Śrī Praśūrāma; Śrī Gaṅgā Bhakta, who resided at Dhruvakṣetra; Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa, who resided at Śeṣasāi, and who gave shelter to the devotees of the Lord; Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa, the servant of Kuṇḍā; Śrī Khema, Śrī Soṭhā, Śrī Gopānanda, Śrī Jayadeva, Śrī Rāghava; Śrī Vidura, who lived at Jayatāraṇa village; Śrī Dayāla, Śrī Dāmodara, Śrī Mohana, Śrī Paramānanda, Śrī Raghunātha, Śrī Uddhava, and Śrī Caturonagana, who now resides in the groves of Vṛṇḍāvana.

❀ Śrī Uddhava ❀

Śrī Uddhava had greater faith and love for the devotees than he had for the Supreme Lord. He had a beautiful drinking glass which he used for the service of his Deity. Once, a devotee asked for that glass and Śrī Uddhava gave it to him. He bought another glass and offered it in the service of his Deity, but the Lord threw it away and said, “I don’t like this glass. If you don’t bring back the original glass, I will not eat or drink anything.”

Śrī Uddhava said, “A devotee gave me that glass and I gave it to another devotee. Considering this, You should not feel upset. Even if you remain upset, I don’t care because my happiness lies in the satisfaction of the devotees.”

The Lord was pleased to hear this. Once, some devotees came to Śrī Uddhava’s house and he was very happy to receive them,

but he was also worried because there was little food in his house to feed them. On the order of Śrī Rāma, an elderly lady came to Śrī Uddhava's house, gave him so many varieties of grains and vegetables, and then mysteriously disappeared. Later on, Śrī Uddhava understood that this was a manifestation of the Lord's mercy. Śrī Uddhava was thus able to feed all the devotees for some days.

❀ Śrī Vidura ❀

Śrī Vidura resided in the village of Jayatāraṇa. He was very fond of faithfully rendering service to saintly persons. Once, there was no rainfall so that the crops in all the fields dried up. Śrī Vidura was anxious, thinking, "Without foodgrains, how will I be able to serve the devotees?"

The Supreme Lord, who is very affectionate to his devotee, ordered Śrī Vidura in a dream, saying, "Harvest the dried-up crops and bring everything home. By doing this, you will get two thousand mounds of food grains."

After receiving this order of the Lord, Śrī Vidura felt a stronger attachment for Him. Accepting the Lord's instructions, he brought the dried-up crops home while all the other people of the village laughed at him. They did not believe that Śrī Vidura would get even a single particle of grain from those dried-up crops. Still, Śrī Vidura had firm faith in the Lord and so he harvested his

crops while chanting His holy names. As he was taking out the grains from the harvested crops, with the help of the wind, he soon collected a huge amount of grain. Everyone then understood that Śrī Vidura was a pure devotee of the Lord.

❀ Text 148 ❀

❀ Śrī Caturonagana ❀

Śrī Caturonagana was fully absorbed in the worship of the Lord throughout the entire day and night. He was a perfected mystic *yogī*. He would meditate on the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and thus remain in a trance. At the same time, he maintained all classes of devotees—both householders and renunciates. He resided at Śrī Vṛndāvana, but he would roam around Mathurā and all over Vraja-maṇḍala. He worshiped his spiritual master to establish the principles of *vaiṣṇava-dharma*. He was a sweet speaker who glorified the transcendental name, form, qualities, and pastimes of the Lord everywhere in Vraja, thus giving the devotees great pleasure. Countless devotees and other saintly persons glorified the activities and qualities of Śrī Caturonagana.

Śrī Caturonagana made a vow to reside in Vrajabhūmi throughout his entire life. Śrī Baṅkhe Bihārī was seated in his heart. While residing in Vṛndāvana, he continuously relished the mellows of the *dhāma*.

Śrī Caturonaganajī would go for the *darśana* of Śrī Govindadeva during *maṅgala-ārati*, then he would go to Mathurā and have the *darśana* of Śrī Keśavadeva's *śṛṅgāra-ārati*, then he would go to Varsāna-Nandagrāma and see the *rājabhoga ārati* there, and finally return to Śrī Vṛṇḍāvana in the evening after visiting Goverdhana Hill and Rādhā-kuṇḍa on the way. This was his daily practice. From morning to evening, Śrī Caturonagana happily traveled about seventy-two miles every day.

Once, Śrī Caturonagana spent three days without eating or drinking at Pāvana-sarovara in Nandagrāma. Finally, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is very affectionate to His devotees, personally brought him some milk. Śrī Caturonagana ecstatically drank the milk and then asked the boy to give him some water. The young Vrajavāsī boy went to fetch water but never returned. This made Śrī Caturonagana very unhappy at heart. That night, the Lord gave him His *darśana* in a dream and said, "Do not feel sad. It was I who came and gave you milk."

The Lord again appeared to Śrī Caturonagana in a dream and said, "After giving you milk, I did not give you water, even though you asked for it, because now you don't need water anymore. Simply go from house to house in Vrajabhūmī and drink milk."

Śrī Caturonagana said, "O my Lord, the Vrajavāsīs are very fond of milk and so I don't think that they will give me any."

The Lord said, "This is My order and so

everyone will certainly offer you some milk."

Accepting this order, Śrī Caturonagana went from village to village, and from house to house, and wherever he went, he was offered milk.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Svabhurāmadevācārya was an exalted devotee of the Śrī Nimbārka *sampradāya*. Once, as his grand disciple, Śrī Paramānandadevācārya, was traveling to various holy places of pilgrimage, he arrived at Vraja-maṇḍala and stayed at a place near Śrī Caturonagana's birth place, Paigada. Since that place was full of *kadamba* trees, it was called Kadamkhaṇḍi.

Śrī Caturonagana's horoscope indicated that he would live a short life and so his parents were always anxious. Once, Śrī Caturonagana went to have the *darśana* of Śrī Paramānandadevācārya. He took shelter of him and accepted him as his spiritual master. He also accepted the renounced order of life from him and began serving him as his spiritual master. He went and stayed at his guru's āśrama at Oli in Haryana and served him there.

Śrī Caturonagana had thousands of disciples and grand-disciples, and he constructed many temples and āśramas at various places, such as Govinda-kūṇḍa, Vairāgyapura, Kāmavana, and Varṣāṇā.

Śrī Caturonagana's cave at Kadamkhaṇḍi is worth seeing. Two of his temples are situated at Bihāra-ghāṭa in Vṛṇḍāvana, and at the fort in Bharatapura. He was the one

who introduced Vraja-maṇḍala-parikrama. Even today, following the example of Śrī Nāgāji, devotees perform *parikrama* on the tenth day of the waning moon in the month of Bhādra.

❀ Text 149 ❀

Devotees who maintained themselves by begging alms from door to door

The author of this book, Śrī Nābhā Gosvāmī, says that he dedicates his body, mind, wealth, and life to these devotees who are engaged in the service of the Lord. They are Śrī Gomānanda from Dvārakā, Śrī Paramānanda Kāluka from Mathurā and Khorā, the two devotees named Bhagavāna from Sāṅgānera, Śrī Viṭṭhala and Śrī Khema from Ṭoṇḍ, Paṇḍā from Gunaurā village, Śrī Gopāla from Jaitāraṇa village, Śrī Caudharī from Pipora village, and Śrī Śyāma and Śrī Kevaladās, who appeared in the Sena family. The author says, “These devotees have purchased me by their pure devotion. I am sold out to them.”

❀ Śrī Gomānanda ❀

Śrī Gomānanda rendered service to the devotees by begging small quantities of food door to door. One day, a group of twenty devotees came to his house. Śrī Gomānanda

had only about a kilo of wheat flour in his house. The devotees said to him, “We would like to have food made with wheat flour.”

Śrī Gomānanda went to the market to bring wheat flour but could not find any. Seeing him in anxiety, Śrī Rāma took the form of Śrī Gomānanda and brought a sack of wheat and gave it to Śrī Gomānanda’s wife, saying, “I am going to where the devotees are waiting. In the meantime, grind the wheat and make flour.”

When the real Śrī Gomānanda returned home from the market and saw the wheat, he asked, “How did this wheat come here?”

His wife replied, “You brought it here a little while ago.”

Śrī Gomānanda understood that he had been blessed by the Supreme Lord. From that time onwards, both Śrī Gomānanda and his wife began serving the devotees with greater faith and devotion.

❀ Śrī Paramānanda ❀

Śrī Paramānanda begged a small quantity of alms by going door to door, just as a bee collects a small amount of honey from each flower, and utilized whatever he got in the service of the devotees.

One day, he teased the Lord, saying, “Generally, the devotees of the Lord are poor. When the Lord has nothing then what can He give to the devotees, and the when the devotees have nothing in their

possession, what can they give to the Lord?”

Hearing this, the Lord went with two hundred gold coins to Śrī Paramānanda. His eyes filled with tears and his voice choked up, Śrī Paramānanda said, “O Lord, I was simply joking, but You have taken me seriously and have proved that You can give anything and everything to Your devotees.”

Śrī Paramānanda accepted the wealth mercifully given by the Lord and then arranged for a grand festival. He spent his entire life in the service of the Lord and His devotees.

❀ Śrī Bhagavāna ❀

Śrī Bhagavāna begged alms door to door and utilized whatever he received to serve the devotees. Once, there was a drought in the country and it was very difficult to receive any alms. He would welcome guests, even saintly persons, but because he could not serve them to his full satisfaction, he decided to leave home. Then the Lord spoke as a voice in the sky, saying, “Rest assured that I will give you some wealth and you should use that in the service of the devotees.”

Śrī Bhagavāna said, “My Lord, I will not accept any wealth from You. Just make everybody happy and prosperous, and I will beg for alms door to door and use their donations to serve saintly persons.”

By the mercy of the Lord, the drought

ended so that Śrī Bhagavāna was able to continue with his service to the devotees.

❀ Śrī Śyāma ❀

Śrī Śyāma appeared in the family of the famous devotee, Bhakta Sena. He was also an elevated devotee of the Lord. When he was a householder, a pure devotee came to his house and instructed him by saying, “If you wish to realize the Supreme Lord and thereby make your life successful, you should beg for alms door to door and utilize whatever you receive for the service of the devotees.”

By the mercy of that great soul, Śrī Śyāma detached his body and mind from worldly affairs and engaged in the service of the devotees by collecting a small quantity of alms from many people.

Once, as Śrī Śyāma was begging for alms at a house, the only son of that householder died. All the family members sat surrounded the dead body and piteously cried. Śrī Śyāma felt compassionate, and while chanting the holy names of the Lord, he touched the boy’s dead body so that he instantly came back to life. He then said, “I deserve no credit for this. This is the result of the prowess gained by serving the devotees.”

All the people were impressed and so they also started chanting the holy names of the Lord. Śrī Śyāma instructed everyone also serve the devotees whenever the opportunity arose.

❀ Śrī Paṇḍā ❀

Śrī Kilhadeva's disciple, Śrī Devīdāsa Paṇḍā, was born in a *brāhmaṇa* family in Jaipura. Later on, he moved to Gunaura village and resided there. His mother's name was Pālibāī, and he had three brothers. His wife's name was Rūpādevī.

Śrī Paṇḍā had four sons, named Nārāyaṇa dāsa, Gopinātha, Kanhiyā dāsa, and Kalyāṇa dāsa. He was a farmer, and he utilized whatever income he received for rendering service to the Lord and His devotees.

Once, as Śrī Paṇḍā was ploughing the land, his mother went to bring him his meal in the field. On the way, the Lord in the form of a devotee met her. She fed Him some *rotis* made from millet and *rabaḍī*. Then the Lord in the guise of a devotee said, "My dear mother, something inauspicious will occur in this village and so should you tell Devāsāsa Paṇḍā to leave home and go somewhere else to reside."

Śrī Paṇḍā took these words seriously and went somewhere else.

Once, when the yoke of his bullock cart broke, he stopped and then dug up the earth and found a Deity of the Lord. Śrī Paṇḍā became very joyful upon receiving the Lord's Deity. In the meantime, some dacoits came to his village and plundered everything and then set fire to the entire village.

Śrī Paṇḍā established his Deity on a raised platform and began serving Him. One day, the Lord gave him a handful of millet seeds and asked him to sow them in the field. Śrī

Paṇḍā did this and reaped twelve mounds of millet in a short time. Indeed, there was no end to the amount of food grains in his house, by the mercy of the Lord. Later on, a temple was built for his Deity.

Once, as the king of Delhi was going to Ajmera to have the *darśana* of Khvājāpira, he heard praises of Śrī Paṇḍā and so went to him and said, "Kindly show me a miracle."

Śrī Paṇḍā said, "I do not know anything other than my service to the Lord."

Then, on the order of the king, his men began breaking the dome of Śrī Paṇḍā's temple. The Ṭhākuras of his family, and his son, Kalyāṇa dāsa, fought bravely with the king and sacrificed their lives. Then, when the king went into the temple, he saw the Khvājāpira and Meccā Madīnā. The king was so impressed by this miracle that he allotted eight hundred seventy *bighās* of land for the service of the Deity.

Another time, another king came to witness Śrī Paṇḍā's mystic power. He thought, "If I see that the Deity has been offered *ghevara* today then I will understand that he is a perfect *yogī*."

The Deity ordered the Śrī Paṇḍā to offer Him some *ghevara*, and the *prasāda* was given to the king. After witnessing this miracle, the king became a disciple of Śrī Paṇḍā.

Śrī Paṇḍā's brother and his wife were unhappy because they had no children. When the Lord was petitioned by Śrī Paṇḍā, He ordered them to write with sandalwood paste and *tulasī* leaves, "may she have a

child,” on her abdomen. Thus it came to be that Śrī Paṇḍājī’s brother was blessed with a son. Śrī Paṇḍā’s family accepted the divine seat of Galtā as their *guru āśrama*. On every Dvādaśī, a fair takes place there.

❀ Śrī Kevaladāsa ❀

Śrī Kevaladāsa was born in a family of potters. By his devotional prowess, he not only delivered his family, but also innumerable people of the world. He was attached to serving saintly persons.

Once, many devotees arrived at his house and so Śrī Kevaladāsa respectfully greeted them but was sad because he had no food grains that day. He went to several merchants to take a loan but no one gave him any money, even with the promise of interest. One merchant said, “If you dig my well then I can give you food grains and vegetables, as much as you need.”

Śrī Kevaladāsa accepted the proposal and dug a large well while chanting the holy names of the Lord, and in return he brought home a great quantity of food grains and wealth. Thereafter, he affectionately fed all the devotees, for they were very dear to Lord Śyāmasundara.

While Śrī Kevaladāsa was digging the well for the merchant, he constantly chanted the holy names of the Lord. Finally, when he was almost finished digging the well, both the merchant and Śrī Kevaladāsa were pleased,

but then, the huge piles of dirt piled around the well slipped down into the hole. Indeed, the sandy soil fell on Śrī Kevaladāsa as he was inside the well and completely covered him. The people there thought, “How can we remove such a huge amount of dirt? Oh well, Śrī Kevaladāsa must have suffocated to death and so what is the use of removing the dirt?”

Lamenting like this, everyone departed. After about a month, as some people were passing by the unfinished well, they heard the sound of Śrī Rāma’s holy name. They went to the village and informed everyone about this astonishing news. Immediately, many people gathered around the well and began loudly and enthusiastically chanting the holy name of Lord Hari. They began remove the dirt which had fallen on Śrī Kevaladāsa. When they finally uncovered him, they were astonished to hear the chanting of the holy name, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma.

Śrī Kevaladāsa was brought out of the unfinished well and seated in an open space. People came and fell at his lotus feet. Then it was seen that Śrī Kevaladāsa was sitting while bending his body so that he appeared to be hunchbacked. Then a golden container filled with water was seen placed next to him. Seeing all this, the people had no doubt that Śrī Kevaladāsa was a great devotee of the Lord.

Finally, the people brought Śrī Kevaladāsa to his house. From that time, his name and fame began spreading throughout the land. People would come from distant places to

see him. Seeing Śrī Kevaladāsa's devotion and exemplary character, people gave him much land and wealth which he utilized to serve the devotees and the poor.

Once, as a devotee was bringing a beautiful Deity of blackish-complexioned Śrī Rāma from Jaipur to install in his temple, he stopped at Śrī Kevaladāsa's house to rest. Seeing the beautiful Deity of Śrī Rāma, Śrī Kevaladāsa thought, "If the Lord is kind upon me then I pray that He will stay at my house and accept my service."

The Lord accepted Śrī Kevaladāsa's prayer and permanently remained at his house. The next morning, when the devotees tried to take the Deity, He refused to move even an inch.

Śrī Kevaladāsa simply smiled and said, "Lord Hari is fully independent and the supreme controller. He is exhibiting affection for this servant and so He will stay here now. Even if you try to pick Him up, He will not move."

Understanding that Śrī Rāma had accepted his prayers, Śrī Kevaladāsa named the Deity Jānarāi Rāmacandra. Having received the Lord in his house, and having gotten the opportunity to render service to Him, Śrī Kevaladāsa felt exceedingly blissful. Even today, one can see this Deity of Jānarāi Rāmacandra at Jhintharā village.

Once, Śrī Kevaladāsa thought, "Let me go to Dvārakā and imprint my body with the marks of a conch shell and *cakra*." He set out from his house, but on the way, the Lord ordered him, saying, "Go back home

and remain there. Simply serve the saintly devotees you meet, for there is no better way to please Me than this. Please carry out My order with faith and determination. All your desires will be fulfilled while staying at home and so there is no need to go anywhere else."

Accepting this order, Śrī Kevaladāsa returned home. After some days, he was amazed to find that the marks of a conch shell and *cakra* were on his body. There were so many wonderful incidents that took place and so Śrī Kevaladāsa's fame began to spread.

Previously, at Dvārakā, the ocean and the Gomatī River merged, but now that is no longer so. Hearing about this, Śrī Kevaladāsa sent his chanting beads to Dvārakā with some devotees. When the devotees placed his chanting beads between the sea and the Gomatī River, the two immediately joined as a confluence. In this way, Śrī Kevaladāsa revived the confluence of the Gomatī and the ocean.

❁ Additional Commentary ❁

Śrī Kevaladāsa was a disciple of Śrī Payahārī. To deliver the people from the clutches of Māyāvāda philosophy, Śrī Kevaladāsa strictly observed Vaiṣṇava *dharma*. Once, he transformed *khicaḍī* into sweet rice. This was possible by the prowess attained by serving the devotees.

Once, his wife, Purībāi, went somewhere and Lord Sītā-Rāma personally came to his house and carried out the duties of serving the guest devotees. This went on for one full

year.

Once, by the mercy of the Lord, *khicaḍī* was transformed into *halvā* because Śrī Kevaladāsa wanted to give *halvā* to the devotees. And the plates which were used to offer *halvā* transformed into golden plates. Seeing this miracle, Śrī Kevaladāsa understood that Śrī Sītā-Rāma had come to his house, disguised as a human couple, to help him serve the devotees. Later on, the Supreme Lord revealed this mystery to him and then disappeared from view.

❀ Text 150 ❀

❀ The disciples of Śrī Agradeva ❀

By the mercy of Svāmī Śrī Agradevācārya, these disciples waved the victory flag of supreme religious principles. They were Śrī Jaṅgī, the famous Śrī Prayāgadāsa, Śrī Vinodī, Śrī Puṇadāsa, Śrī Vanavārīdāsa, Śrī Nṛsimhadāsa, the exalted devotee Śrī Bhagavāna dāsa Śrī Divākaradāsa, who served the Supreme Lord with unfailing determination; the soft and simple-minded Śrī Kiśoradāsa; Śrī Jagannātha, who was always alert while performing his service to the Lord; Śrī Saludhau, Śrī Khema, and Śrī Laghu Uddhava, who patiently and carefully observed religious principles.

By the mercy of their spiritual master, Śrī Agradeva, these devotees freed many surrendered souls from their physical and

mental disturbances.

❀ Śrī Jaṅgī ❀

Śrī Jaṅgī was a perfected devotee. Once, while roaming about, he came to the āśrama of another devotee. Next to the āśrama was a Yavana fort. At that time, some Yavanas came to that devotee's āśrama and said, "We want to expand our fort and so you must leave this place and go somewhere else."

Śrī Jaṅgī felt compassion for the local devotees and so he said to the Yavanas, "Tell your king to construct another āśrama for the devotees to stay. Only then will we vacate this place."

The Yavanas became very angry and began destroying the āśrama. Śrī Jaṅgī then kicked the fort in such a way that it was smashed to pieces lying in heaps upon the ground. Later on, when the king saw this exhibition spiritual potency, he came and fell at Śrī Jaṅgī's feet. The king gave him abundant wealth in charity and Śrī Jaṅgī used it for serving the devotees. Thus he protected both the devotees and their residences.

❀ Śrī Vinodī ❀

Once, after being engaged for a long time in worhiping the Lord within his mind, Śrī Vinodī, he opened his eyes and saw a simple-minded disciple sitting before him.

The disciple inquired, “O Gurudeva, what were you doing?”

Śrī Vinodī replied, “I was worshiping the Lord.”

The disciple said, “O Gurudeva, after worship of the Lord, one traditionally distributes *caraṇāmṛta*. Where is the *caraṇāmṛta*?”

Śrī Vinodī then gave him some *caraṇāmṛta* from a water pot kept nearby, and as a result, the disciple began to perceive Śrī Sītā-Rāma everywhere. Such was Śrī Vinodī’s spiritual prowess. All the disciples of Śrī Agradēvācārya were empowered like this.

❖ Text 151 ❖

❖ The descendants of Śrī Ṭilā ❖

Śrī Ṭilā and his renounced disciple, Śrī Lāhā, became very famous, just as the peak of Sumeru Mountain in Bhārata-khaṇḍa is glorified all over the earth. Śrī Ṭilā’s son and disciple, Śrī Paramānanda dāsa, was always very cautious while practicing devotional service. Śrī Ṭilā’s had other disciples, headed by Śrī Jogodāsa; Śrī Khema, who was very powerful, detached, and wise; Śrī Dhyānadāsa, who was very liberal, and Śrī Keśava dāsa. They were all great devotees of Lord Harī.

Śrī Tyaulā, who preached very boldly, was an illustrious member of the Lohāra dynasty. Śrī Harīdāsa had great love and devotion

for Śrī Hanumāna. All the householder and renunciate devotees coming in the line of Śrī Ṭil were very expert in cultivating the nine kinds of devotional service. They continuously rendered service to the devotees.

❖ Śrī Ṭilā ❖

Śrī Ṭilā was a devotee of Śrī Rāma and cows. Once, as Śrī Ṭilā was tending his cows in the forest, a devotee said to him, “Please give me some milk.”

Śrī Ṭilā said, “Kindly wait for some time and I will bring you some milk.”

The devotee said, “There is no need for you to go anywhere else to milk your cows. Milk this cow and bring the milk to me.”

Śrī Ṭilā said, “That particular cow is barren and so unable to give milk.”

The devotee said, “Just do as I say.”

Śrī Ṭilā went to that cow and began milking her. To everyone’s surprise, milk came from her udders. The devotee drank that milk and also gave Śrī Ṭilā *prasāda*. Śrī Ṭilā thus understood the wonderful influence of that devotee, and he also appreciated the sublime taste of the *prasāda* and so he fell down at that devotee’s feet and offered obeisances.

❀ **Text 152** ❀❀ **Śrī Kānhara** ❀

Śrī Kānhara organized grand and auspicious festivals in Mathura like no one else. In his grand festival, people from the four *varṇas* and four *āśramas* came and took *prasāda*. Śrī Kānhara had such great respect for the devotees of the Supreme Lord. Anyone who came to his festival never returned disappointed or unhappy. These festivals mainly consisted of chanting of the Lord's holy names. During the festival, Śrī Kānhara distributed sandalwood, cloth, ornaments, and other things. The supremely liberal Śrī Kānhara would even give away the Lord's ornaments to those who participated in chanting the holy names of the Lord. He always felt very happy serving others. Śrī Viṭṭhala's son, Śrī Kānhara, would run here and there during the festivals, taking the dust from the feet of the other devotees and then smearing it over his head.

❀ **Text 153** ❀❀ **Śrī Nivā** ❀

Just as a farmer tends his fields, Śrī Nivā and Śrī Kheta Singh treated the devotees of the Lord in Kaliyuga with the same care and attention. Almost every day, devotees would gather at Śrī Nivā's house. He would greet

the devotees very respectfully, wash their feet, and then take the water and sprinkle it over his head. He would offer obeisances to the devotees by falling flat onto the ground. He would then take them inside the house and give them a sitting place. He loved the devotees with all his heart. Śrī Nivā arranged for the performance of *kirtana* at many places. He would satisfy the devotees in various ways by speaking sweet words to them, and showing them all respect. He had selfless non-duplicitous love and devotion for the devotees. He was always very respectful to both the devotees and the Supreme Lord.

❀ **Text 154** ❀❀ **Śrī Bhagavāna Tumbara** ❀

The exalted devotee, Śrī Bhagavāna, regularly arranged huge festival for the benefit of the others. Varieties of foodstuffs would appear just as cloth was supplied to Draupadī when Duṣṣāsana tried to disrobe her. Something wonderful happened during one of his festivals. Sugar candy, ghee, white flour, and sugar were showered upon his *āśrama*. There was also the miraculous appearance of silver and gold coins. People who participated in the festival became very pleased as they were awarded more charity than they could ever expect. In that festival, the devotees, *brāhmaṇas*, and the poor were fed to their full satisfaction. The congregational chanting of the holy

name of Lord Har was followed by a *rāsa-lilā* performance. Śrī Bhīma's son, Śrī Bhagavāna, arranged such an opulent festival that the other kings who heard about this also decided to arrange similar festivals. However, they only thought like that but could never arrange a festival like that of Śrī Bhagavāna. No one could conduct such a grand and opulent festival like Śrī Bhagavāna.

❀ Text 155 ❀

❀ Śrī Jasvanta ❀

Śrī Jasvanta of the Rāṭhōra family strictly followed the path of devotional service practiced by his elder brother, Śrī Jayamāla Singh. He had sincere love and devotion for the devotees of the Supreme Lord. He was always prepared to stand with folded hands before the devotees, ready to carry out their orders. He was very fond of relishing Śrī Bihārījī's pastimes in the groves of Vṛndāvana. He rendered service to his worshipable Lord, Śrī Rādhā-vallabhalāla. Śrī Jasvanta was an abode of Vaiṣṇava *dharma*, manifested as the nine kinds of devotional service. By hearing and remembering the Lord, and by discussing His subject matters, he remained absorbed in love of God.

❀ Text 156 ❀

❀ Śrī Haridāsa ❀

I thank that mother who gave birth to the great devotee, Śrī Haridāsa, whose purpose in life was to serve the devotees and the Lord. Śrī Haridāsa was endowed with all the good qualities of the demigods, and his activities were very confidential. He did not publicly exhibit his ecstatic love for the Lord. Only the devotees of the Lord can understand another devotee's divine qualities. Although he was born in a *vaiśya* family, he was able to understand the most confidential truths which were inaccessible to others. He boldly declared, "Although I reside in Kāśī, I will give up my body in Vraja-dhāma."

By this vow he ultimately attained the abode of Vṛndāvana. He displayed to everyone the wonderful influence of his *bhajana* for the satisfaction of Śrī Rādhā-vallabha. He was fixed in his *sādhana* and never became distracted. He was one of those great devotees who fulfill the desire of everyone, even in this formidable age of Kali.

Although Śrī Haridāsa was born in a mercantile family and was residing in a place near Kāśī, he took a vow that he would leave his body in Vraja Vṛndāvana. In the final days of his life, he suddenly became very ill, suffering from a high fever. Indeed, his pulse completely stopped. Three doctors came and tended to him, but all of them said that it was impossible for him to survive and

so there was no need to give him medication.

In such a condition, Śrī Harīdāsa said, “My mind is strongly attracting me towards Vraja Vṛṇḍāvana-dhāma.”

Śrī Harīdāsa had four daughters, and he married them all to devotees. He requested his relatives to place him in a palanquin and take him to Vṛṇḍāvana. He said, “The abode of Vṛṇḍāvana is again and again coming into my mind.”

Some devotees then placed him on a palanquin and started for Vṛṇḍāvana. On the way, they chanted the name of Śrī Rādhā-vallabha. All the villagers were very shocked to see Śrī Harīdāsa in such a condition and they concluded that he would not make it to Vṛṇḍāvana.

As the devotees were carrying him, Śrī Harīdāsa left his body before reaching Vṛṇḍāvana, but still, Śrī Śyāmasundara fulfilled his desire. The Lord showed him the transcendental abode of Vṛṇḍāvana and awarded him a spiritual body which allowed him to enter Śrī Vṛṇḍāvana.

Upon arriving in Vṛṇḍāvana in his spiritual body, Śrī Harīdāsa had the *darśana* of his worshipable Lord Śrī Rādhā-vallabha, along with his spiritual master, Śrī Vanacandra. He went to Cira-ghāṭa and bathed in the Yamunā River.

The devotees who were carrying him in the palanquin finally arrived in Vṛṇḍāvana while lamenting and crying. They came and informed Śrī Harīdāsa’s spiritual master, “We were bringing Śrī Harīdāsa to Śrī Vṛṇḍāvana, but the sad thing is that he left

his body on the way.”

All the devotees of Vṛṇḍāvana then said, “He came to Vṛṇḍāvana that very day.”

This is the wonderful influence of the devotees who engage in unalloyed devotional service. Once should not doubt the inconceivable activities performed by the devotees. Without the mercy of the Lord, it is not possible to receive a spiritual body and attain the shelter of Vṛṇḍāvana-dhāma.

❀ Text 157 ❀

❀ Śrī Gopāla and Śrī Viṣṇudāsa ❀

Śrī Gopāla resided in the village of Bāmbolī. He possessed all godly qualities, he very grave in nature, and he constantly chanted the glories of Lord Hari. Śrī Viṣṇudāsa was a resident of Kāśīra village in the Southern province. He was a very experienced devotee. Both Śrī Gopāla and Śrī Viṣṇudāsa rendered service to the spiritual master and the Supreme Lord, treating them as being on the same platform. Whenever they saw a devotee with *tilaka* and *kañṭhī-māla*, they offered him great respect and served him to the best of their ability. The Supreme Lord has declared that worship of His devotee is more important than His worship. Accepting that statement, both vowed to always render service to saintly persons. Both Śrī Gopāla and Śrī Viṣṇudāsa became famous throughout the world because they

were elevated Vaiṣṇava, and very strictly followed the principles of their *dharma*.

Śrī Gopāla and Śrī Viṣṇudāsa were godbrothers, and both were very fond of serving the devotees. Indeed, they instituted a unique way of rendering service to the devotees. Whenever they were invited to a festival, they would go carrying a great quantity of food grains, ghee, sugar, wheat flour, and other food. They would secretly offer these things to the cook who prepared food for all the people attending the festival. They did this because they did not want that there should be any shortage food at the festival so that people would criticize the devotees. However, no one could understand their intention.

After the festival, everyone feel very satisfied because there was an abundance of food. Their spiritual master of Śrī Gopāla and Śrī Viṣṇudāsa was Śrī Nāmadeva, a celebrated and exalted soul. Śrī Gopāla and Śrī Viṣṇudāsa were fortunate to have met Śrī Kabīra.

❀ Text 158 ❀

❀ The disciples of Śrī Kīlhadeva ❀

By the mercy of Śrī Kīlhadevacārya, all of his disciples became as pure as the Lord's associates. They were very accomplished devotees on the path of devotional service. These devotees are Śrī Āsakarāṇa, who

was the king of sages; Śrī Rūpadāsa; Śrī Bhagavāna dāsa, who was very devoted to his spiritual master Śrī Caturadāsa, who was fearless; Śrī Chitara, who was the crest jewel of all intelligent persons; Śrī Lākhai, who had wonderful strength; Śrī Rāīmala, who always benefitted others by his mind, speech, and actions; Śrī Khemadāsa, Śrī Rasikarāīmala, Śrī Gauradāsa, Śrī Devādāsa, and Śrī Dāmodara, who was a great devotee of Lord Rāma. All these devotees were genuine servants of Śrī Rāma, and were expert in observing religious principles and performing *bhajana*.

❀ Text 159 ❀

❀ Śrī Nātha Bhaṭṭa ❀

Śrī Nātha Bhaṭṭa was a disciple of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, and the son of Śrī Gopāla dāsa. He was an abode of *rāgānugā-bhakti* and a worshiper of the Lord in *ujjvala-rasa*. His words were sublime and he was one of the leading devotees of his time. He carefully studied all the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas*. He extracted the essence of all the scriptures just as a *yogī* produces gold by a mixture of mercury and copper. He understood the confidential truths and devotional conclusions on the level of Śrī Rūpa, Śrī Sanātana, and Śrī Jīva. He mastered the teachings of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa and preached them to others. He observed the regulative principles very strictly throughout

his entire life. He is best known for his distribution of the science of devotional service to everyone.

❀ Additional Commentary ❀

Śrī Nātha Bhaṭṭa's speech was just like nectar. He was a very learned person. Once, a quarrelsome person who had mystic powers received from Bhairava came to him and challenged him with foolish arguments. Śrī Nātha Bhaṭṭa defeated him by presenting the scriptural conclusions. That person prayed and meditated on Bhairavadeva. Then, in the mood of Bhairavadeva, he again challenged Śrī Nātha Bhaṭṭa. This time, Śrī Nātha Bhaṭṭa grabbed that man's śikhā and vigorously shook him. By the power of Śrī Nātha Bhaṭṭa's devotional service, Bhairavadeva disappeared. That person then said with folded hands, "Kindly spare my life. I will never quarrel with the devotees of Lord Hari again."

Śrī Nātha Bhaṭṭa gave him initiation into the chanting of a Viṣṇu *mantra*. Śrī Nātha Bhaṭṭa resided at Uñchegaon, near Varasānā.

❀ Text 160 ❀

❀ Śrī Karamaitī ❀

In spite of taking birth in this age of Kali, Śrī Karamaitī remained free from all kinds of sinful contamination. She gave up

her affection for her worldly husband and devoted her life to the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who she considered her actual husband. She destroyed her bondage to the material world by the power of her logic and reasoning. Her father, Śrī Paraśurāma, was glorious because he gave birth to an exalted devotee like Śrī Karamaitī. It is well-known that Śrī Karamaitī left home and went to reside in Vṛṇḍāvana-dhāma. All the devotees praised her renunciation, detachment, and devotional practices. She rejected the material happiness derived from sense gratification as being no better than vomit. She had no desire to enjoy worldly comforts.

Śrī Karamaitī was the daughter of Śrī Paraśurāma, who was the priest of the Śekhāvata king. She lived in Khaṇḍelā village in Rājasthāna. Lord Śyāmasundara, who is more beautiful than thousands of Cupids, resided in her heart. She neglected all her worldly duties and simply engaged in the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Every day she would sit down and meditate on the Lord for many hours. Although she was a lady, by the mercy of the Lord, this did not prove to be an impediment to her service. She was always joyful in the service of the Lord. Her mind and intelligence were engaged in thinking of the Lord. She was married, but she lived like a true devotee, without any attachment to worldly objects or relatives.

❀ **Text 161** ❀

❀ **Śrī Khaḍga Singh** ❀

Śrī Khaḍga Singh's words shone brightly while describing the transcendental glories of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. He correctly described the names and characteristics of the *gopīs* of Vraja, and the parents of the cowherd boys. He composed a book known as *Dānakelī-dīpaka*. From this book it is understood that he had sufficient knowledge of the Vedic literature, and that his intelligence was very sharp. He spent his time writing about the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys and girls of Vraja.

Śrī Khaḍga Singh was born in a *kāyastha* family, and he delivered his family members. He had firm faith in devotion for the Supreme Lord and so he never endeavored for material enjoyment. He left his body while watching the grand *rāsa-līlā* performance arranged on the day of Śarada Pūrṇimā, as mentioned in the *Gautamiya-tantra*.

Once, Śrī Khaḍga Singh arranged a *rāsa-līlā* program in his hometown, Gwalior. That night, he was completely absorbed in love of God, and his mood of devotion increased as the day wore on. Indeed, he could continuously visualize their Lordships, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. On the night of the *rāsa-līlā* program, he began dancing and singing in a joyful mood while continuously gazing at Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. It was then that time he gave up his mortal body and entered the

eternal pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. He relished love and devotion for the Lord and he gave up his life in the service of the Lord. Śrī Priyādāsa was very pleased and impressed by how Śrī Khaḍga Singh gave up his life.

❀ **Text 162** ❀

❀ **Śrī Gaṅgavāla** ❀

Śrī Gaṅgavāla was a dear friend of Lord Śyāmasundara. His intelligence was very grave. He studied the *Purāṇas* and other Vedic literatures and collected the names of Śrī Rādhikā's *sakhīs*, the names of the cowherd boys of Vraja, the names of the cows of Vraja, and the names of the villages situated in the area of Vraja. He described these things very nicely in his book. He was content to constantly enjoy the ocean of happiness he experienced by contemplating Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Śrī Gaṅgavāla was always submerged in the mellows of those pastimes. He never wasted time uselessly gossiping. He resided in Vrajabhūmī and always meditated on his spiritual master and his worshipable Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Gaṅgavāla had unflinching faith and devotion for his spiritual master and the devotees of Lord Har. His only desire was to remain loyal to the devotees and the Lord.

❀ **Text 163** ❀

❀ **Śrī Sotī** ❀

Śrī Divākara Sotī was like a second sun for revealing spiritual knowledge and devotional service. He was highly praised in the assembly of saintly persons. His mouth was always decorated with the transcendental glories and fame of Śrī Rāmacandra, the husband of Sītā. His only happiness was in glorifying the name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Rāma. His only asset was the lotus feet of Rāghavendra, the life and soul of Śrī Jānakī. He was fully surrendered to Śrī Sītā-Rāma. Śrī Divākara Sotī's spiritual master was Śrī Narahara dāsa. By his spiritual master's mercy, his sons and grandsons also became elevated devotees of the Lord. He was a famous devotee and worshiper of Śrī Rāma, for nothing material could capture his attention.

❀ **Text 164** ❀

❀ **Śrī Lāladāsa** ❀

Śrī Lāladāsa was blessed with divine fame in this life and the supreme abode of Vaikuṇṭha after giving up his body. His heart was a reservoir of all godly qualities. He was very fond of associating with saintly persons. As a lotus leaf is untouched by the water, Śrī Lāladāsa remained in the material

world but was never attracted by worldly happiness. After hearing a recitation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam at Vadhere village, he gave up his life just like Mahārāja Parikṣit. Just as a handsome groom looks beautiful in a marriage party, Śrī Lāladāsa looked beautiful in the assembly of saintly persons. By the order of his spiritual master, he resided at his āśrama at Harisāpura and executed the process of pure devotional service. In this way he made his present life successful and his next life glorious.

❀ **Text 165** ❀

❀ **Śrī Mādhava Gvāla** ❀

For the welfare of His progressing devotees, the Lord sends perfected devotees, such as Śrī Mādhava Gvāla, to this world. Throughout the entire day and night, Śrī Mādhava Gvāla would simply think about how to satisfy the devotees. He was very fond of devotees who were decorated with *tilaka* and *kañṭhī-mālā*. The devotees of the Lord were very dear to Him. He was simply interested in spiritual life and never nourished a desire for enhancing his own self-interest. He was like a swan of loving devotional service. He regularly sang about the Lord's pastimes and was always eager to hear about the Lord's transcendental names, qualities, forms, and pastimes. Śrī Mādhava Gvāla was straightforward, equal to everyone, and a true friend to all living entities. He

maintained a loving relationship with the Lord and all fo His parts and parcels.

❀ Text 166 ❀

❀ Śrī Prayāga Dāsa ❀

By the mercy of his spiritual master, Śrī Agradevācārya, Śrī Prayāga Dāsa spotlessly served both saintly devotees and the Supreme Lord. He never was deviated from his service. He dedicated his mind, speech, and body in the service of the Lord and His devotees. He withdrew his mind from all material activities and engaged it at the lotus feet of Śrī Rāma. He had great love and devotion for the devotees, and he treated them as if they were as good as God, always very respectfully serving them.

Once, when there was a *rāsa-līlā* performance, he became so absorbed in it that he gave up his body then and there. Once, there was a grand festival at the foothill of Arāvalī Mountain, where he was blessed by the Lord in a special manner. On that day, he installed a pitcher at the top of the temple at Kvārā village while simultaneously hoisting a flag at Aulī village. Upon witnessing this miracle, all the learned persons and devotees praised his good fortune.

❀ Text 167 ❀

❀ Śrī Premanidhī ❀

Śrī Premanidhī was a storehouse of godly qualities engaged in the loving devotional service of the Lord. Glorious is that astrologer who gave him the name in accordance with these qualities. He was a gentle and humble by nature. His words were very sweet, pleasant, and beneficial to the hearer. He was like a desire tree giving happiness to the devotees of Lord Hari. That desire tree was filled with the many fruits of pure devotional service.

Although Śrī Premanidhī stayed at home, he was completely detached from worldly life. He completely gave up all kinds of material enjoyment because he relished the essence of love of God.

Śrī Premanidhī observed the prescribed codes of conduct and was very magnanimous. With strict control of his senses, he would associate with the devotees of the Lord. Just to display his mercy to the devotees of Āgrā. Śrī Premanidhī left Vṛṇḍāvana and resided there. He purified the hearts of the people of Āgrā by explaining to them the science of devotional service to the Lord.

Śrī Premanidhī was a disciple of Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha of the Vallabha *sampradāya*. He resided in Āgrā and engaged in the service of Śrī Śyāmabihārī. Every morning, he would go to the Yamunā to fetch water for his Deity. Once, during the rainy season, the road became flooded and so he was

worried about how he would bring Yamunā water. He thought, “If I go in the dark, I might get stuck in the mire, and if I go after the sun rises then I might touch some low caste person on the way.”

Śrī Premanidhī finally decided that would be better to fetch water when it was dark. As he stepped outside, he saw a beautiful young boy standing with a lamp in His hand. Śrī Premanidhī followed the boy all the way to the Yamunā. There, Śrī Premanidhī bathed, but his mind was attracted to the beautiful young boy. Then, when he filled his water jug and put it on his head, the boy again appeared as if from nowhere and showed him the way home.

When Śrī Premanidhī arrived home, the young boy with the lamp mysteriously disappeared. Śrī Premanidhī thought, “Alas! Where is that boy? Who was he?”

Śrī Premanidhī was very eager to see that boy again as tears flowed from his eyes.

❀ Text 168 ❀

❀ Śrī Rāghava dāsa ❀

Although Śrī Rāghava dāsa who was also known as Dūrbala dāsa, or Dūbalā, was physically weak, he was very strong in performing service to the devotees. He observed all the rules and regulations prescribed in the scriptures. He clearly demonstrated the path of renunciation by

not accepting any gifts from his disciples. He was pure, both internally and externally. The sinful activities prevalent in Kali-yuga could not touch him. His nature was truly sublime. He never told a lie in his entire life. He daily engaged in hearing and discussing subjects in relation to the Supreme Lord and His devotees. Just as pure gold is tested by melting it, a diamond is tested by scratching, Śrī Rāghava dāsa proved his purity by tolerating all kinds of opposition and inconveniences.

❀ Text 169 ❀

These devotees were the resting place for service rendered to the devotees of the Lord with faith and respect. They are Śrī Harinārāyaṇa and King Śrī Padma from Verachā, Śrī Uddhava from Hosangābāda, Śrī Tulasīdāsa and Deva Kalyāṇa from Bhelā, Śrī Vohīta and Śrī Vīrārāma from Suhelā, and Śrī Paramānanda from Aulī. All of them carried the victory flag of devotional service and Vaiṣṇava *dharma*, and all rendered service to saintly persons.

❀ Text 170 ❀

Although these devotees were women, they were exalted devotees who very strictly performed their *sādhana* so that they all became powerful personalities. They were

Damābāi, Rāmābāi, Veerābāi, Heerāmaṇī, Lālī, Meerā, Lakṣmībāi, the two famous Pārvatībāis, Khicanībāi, Keśībāi, Dhanābāi; Gaumatībāi, who worshiped the devotees; the celebrated Bāndarārānī, the two Gaṅgā and Yamunā Bāis, Jevābāi, Hariṣābāi, Joisinī, and pure-hearted Kumbarīrāi.

❀ **Text 171** ❀

❀ **Śrī Kānhara dāsa** ❀

By the mercy of the devotees, Śrī Kānhara dāsa was blessed to have the Supreme Lord seated within his heart. He surrendered himself at the lotus feet of his spiritual master and realized that the path of devotional service is the only pure, transcendental, and practical process for attaining liberation from material bondage. Śrī Kānhara dāsa gave up the material conception of life after understanding what is truth and what is illusion. He accepted the truth and rejected illusion. He followed the path of Bhāgavata *dharma*. He remained aloof from the material world just as the moon remains aloof from the branches of the tree, even though it appears to be in their midst. He treated all living entities equally. Śrī Kānhara dāsa was endowed with all godly qualities. He was a great soul who took pleasure in glorifying saintly persons. He never indulged in lying, the uttering of harsh words, or blasphemy of others.

❀ **Text 172** ❀

❀ **Śrī Keśava dāsa** ❀

Śrī Keśava dāsa executed whatever he was instructed. In other words, his behavior was in accordance with his words. He had unalloyed love and devotion for the lotus feet of the Lord. His fame spread all over the world. He was very fortunate because he had received the blessings of the devotees. Just as he was firmly fixed-up in his devotion for saintly persons, his son, Śrī Paraśūrāma, was also. Śrī Paraśūrāma was a unique fruit from the desire tree of Śrī Keśava dāsa. He was also very devoted to the Lord and rendered service to saintly persons when the opportunity arose. He composed many songs and verses in praise of Supreme Lord. He was a disciple of Śrī Surānanda of the Śrī Rāmānanda *sampradāya*. He was a staunch supporter of the Śrī *sampradāya* and very liberal in nature. He was very strong, devoted to following Vaiṣṇava *dharma*, and he arranged grand festivals for glorifying the Lord. He had no interest in worldly activities.

❀ **Text 173** ❀

❀ **Śrī Kevalarāma** ❀

Śrī Kevalarāma delivered many souls who had fallen from the path of righteousness. He delivered those who were averse to

the devotees, the Supreme Lord, Vaiṣṇava *dharama*, and the spiritual master, along with those who regularly criticized the Supreme Lord and His devotees, freeing them from their sinful reactions. He had selfless love and devotion for the Supreme Lord. He was totally indifferent to the sense gratification available in the material world. He studied the scriptures and very well understood the science of devotional service to the Lord. Thus he was able to destroy the darkness born of ignorance dwelling in the hearts of the conditioned souls.

Śrī Kevalarāma was an abode of truth, observance of the prescribed codes of conduct, and compassion. He delivered the fallen souls by engaging them in the nine kinds of devotional service. Indeed, he distributed Lord Kṛṣṇa's mercy to everyone. All his followers wore *tilaka* and *kañthī-mālā*.

It was his practice to go door to door and beg the residents, "Please fix your mind on Lord Kṛṣṇa and chant His holy names."

Once, he met some men who were dressed like devotees but whose behavior was like that of sinful demons. He bestowed mercy upon them by giving them *śālagrāmā-śilās*, *mantras*, *tilaka*, and *tulasī* beads, and requesting them to worship Lord Kṛṣṇa according to the prescribed rules and regulations. In due course of time, all those men became transformed into Vaiṣṇavas.

There was no who compared with Śrī Kevalarāma in terms of compassion for the fallen souls. Once, as he was walking down the street, a man taking a cart brutally beat

his bull. Śrī Kevalarāma felt the pain within himself and fell to the ground. He had compassion for all living entities. He did not discriminate between human beings and animals. Only a great soul can bestow such mercy upon the conditioned souls.

❀ **Text 174** ❀

❀ **Śrī Āsakarāṇa** ❀

The saintly king and devotee, Śrī Āsakarāṇa, embodied the limit of righteousness, proper behavior, and godly qualities. He was the son of Śrī Bhīma Singh, who was the son of Śrī Pṛthvīrāja, the King of Āmera. He was a disciple of Svāmī Kilhadeva.

Śrī Āsakarāṇa was dedicated to following the prescribed codes of conduct for a saintly person. His words were sublime and he composed many verses and songs in glorification of the Supreme Lord. He had all the good qualities of a saintly king, including heroism, patience, gravity, magnanimity, submissiveness, and simplicity.

Śrī Āsakarāṇa, who belonged to the Kūrma dynasty, was a devotee of both Sītāpati Śrī Rāma and Rādhāpati Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He would chant the holy names of his worshipable Lord, Śrī Jānakī-mohana and Śrī Rādhā-mohana, and always desire to attain the shade of Their lotus feet. Because of these qualities and activities, the good fame of Śrī Āsakarāṇa spread everywhere.

❖ **Text 175** ❖❖ **Śrī Harīvaṁsa** ❖

Śrī Harīvaṁsa was a thoroughly renounced devotee. He served all types of devotees, but he especially served those who were renounced devotees. He received the title of Charitable Person by offering everything in the service of the devotees and the Supreme Lord. He was self-satisfied and extremely humble by nature. He never told lies or spoke harsh words to others. He did not waste his time in idle talks, but instead spent his time glorifying the Supreme Lord. Śrī Harīvaṁsa was a disciple and son of Śrī Raṅga. He is said to be an incarnation of one of the Lord's associates. He had firm faith in and devotion for the Supreme Lord.

❖ **Text 176** ❖❖ **Śrī Kalyāṇa dāsa** ❖

Śrī Kalyāṇa dāsa was empowered by the Supreme Lord, and he tirelessly worked for the welfare of others. Just as the waves of a river continuously flow, Śrī Kalyāṇa dāsa's mind continuously flowed towards Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, the transcendental moon-like youth. He took a vow to worship the Supreme Lord without deviation.

Śrī Kalyāṇa dāsa was an abode of mercy. He worshiped and served the devotees

with his mind, speech, and wealth. Well-behaved Śrī Kalyāṇa dāsa was the son of Śrī Dharma dāsa, and was a dear devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, who accepts the internal mood of his devotee.

❖ **Text 177** ❖❖ **Śrī Viṭṭhala dāsa** ❖

Śrī Viṭṭhala dāsa attained both fruits of devotional service—service to the devotees in this life, and service to the Supreme Lord in the next. Throughout his entire life, he engaged in the service of the devotees in various ways. He disregarded proud and rich persons and those who were by nature godless. He never flattered such people for material gain.

Śrī Viṭṭhala dāsa was fixed in the service of the Lord, and by the strength of his service, he was fearless. He was a shining light of the Śrī *sampradāya*, who strictly followed all of its rules and regulations. Everyone considered that he belonged to the Raidāsa *sampradāya*, but still, he was given great respect by exalted personalities in the assembly of devotees.

Śrī Viṭṭhala dāsa left this world while reading and reciting verses glorifying the Lord's pastimes and returned to the spiritual world. Being pleased with him, his spiritual master and Lord Govinda each handed him such a fruit that immediately

they transformed into two hands filled with *laddus*.

Text 178

For rendering service to the devotees, the Lord sent these devotees to this world. These devotees pleased the Lord by their service to saintly personalities. They were Kvāhaba, non-duplicitous Śrī Raṅga; Śrī Sadānanda, who dedicated everything for the service of the devotees; Śrī Śyāma dāsa; the unalloyed devotee, Śrī Lākhā; Śrī Kalyāṇa, who was an experienced singer in the *māru-rāga*; Śrī Nārāyaṇa, who was born in the Parasa family; Śrī Cetā, Śrī Gvāla, Śrī Gopāla, and Śrī Saṅkara, who was very fond hearing about the Lord's pastimes. All of these devotees engaged in the exalted act of serving the devotees of the Lord. Because of their service, Lord Śyāmasundara was very pleased with them.

❀ Text 179 ❀

❀ Śrī Haridāsa ❀

It appeared that the Lord had sent Śrī Haridāsa to this world just to serve the Vaiṣṇavas who were decorated with *tilaka* and *kañthī-mālā*. For protecting the surrendered souls, he was like king Śibi. For giving charity, he was like the sage Dadhici.

For keeping his promises, he was like King Bali. For following Vaiṣṇava *dharma*, he was like Prahlāda Mahārāja, and for offering his head to the Supreme Lord, he was like Śrī Jagadeva. Śrī Haridāsa was a valiant hero, appearing in the family of Śrī Vikā. He was the foremost of those who strictly observed devotional etiquette and the principles of religion. He was a shining light of the Tumbara *kṣatriya* family, and was always busy serving the devotee. It is not at all surprising that Śrī Haridāsa possessed these qualities because he belonged to the dynasty coming from Arjuna and Parikṣit. Because of his strong devotional practices, his fame spread all over the world.

❀ Text 180 ❀

❀ Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa ❀

Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa was a great devotee of the Lord. Once, as he was singing and dancing before the Lord, one of his ankle bells fell off. Śrī Kṛṣṇa took off one of His ankle bells and put it on Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa's foot.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa was an expert singer having knowledge of all the *rāgas*. Whenever Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa sang in glorification of the Lord, everyone felt great happiness. There was no comparison to his melodious singing and beautiful dancing. He was a storehouse containing the arts of music. He was very expert in classical music as well. By his godly

qualities and devotional mood, he conquered Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa always aspired to have the dust of the devotees' lotus feet. He was the son of a goldsmith named Kaḍagu. He took a vow to serve the devotees throughout his entire life.

❀ Text 181 ❀

Śrī Citsukhānanda Sarasvatī wrote a commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* known as *Citsukhī*, in which he established devotional service to Lord Hari as superior to *karma*, *jñāna*, and other *sādhānas*. Śrī Dāmodara Tirtha described the procedure for worshipping Lord Rāmacandra wherein he gave more importance to devotional service than other disciplines. Śrī Nṛsimhāraṇya wrote a book called *Hari-bhakti-candrodaya*. Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī wrote a number of books, including *Bhakti-rasāyana*. Śrī Mādhavānanda was recognized as an exalted devotee of the Lord. Both Śrī Mādhavānanda and Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī were *paramahamsas*, for they fully discriminated between that which is temporary and that which is eternal. Śrī Prabodhānanda, Śrī Rāmabhadra, and Śrī Jagadānanda were worthy of people's praises in Kali-yuga because of their staunch practice of devotional service to the Supreme Lord. All these *sannyāsī* devotees established the approved methods of devotional service to Lord Hari, which are the supreme religious

principles. All of them were crest jewels among the *sannyāsīs*.

❀ Śrī Dāmodara Tirtha ❀

Śrī Citsukhānanda Sarasvatī was a staunch devotee of Śrī Rāma. One day, as he was sitting and chanting the holy names of Sītā-Rāma while meditating on Them, the Lord and His consort personally appeared before him and gave him Their *darśana*. Thereafter, his devotion for Śrī Rāma came to the platform of pure love and he constantly wondered how it would be possible for all of the people to have the Lord's *darśana*. Lord Rāmacandra inspired him to write a book describing the procedures and rules for worshipping the Lord so that people would become eligible to have His *darśana*. Śrī Dāmodara Tirtha wrote *Rāmārcaṇa-paddhatī*. By studying this book, people can be greatly benefitted. Śrī Dāmodara Tirtha preached the path of devotional service by compiling many devotional literatures.

❀ Śrī Nṛsimhāraṇya ❀

Śrī Nṛsimhāraṇya was a pure devotee who composed a book known as *Hari-bhakti-candrodaya*. In that book, he elaborately described the principles of devotional service while rejecting the inferior *sādhānas* like *karma*, *jñāna*, and so on. In this way he

nourished the supreme religion by describing the victory of devotional service over all other methods of self-realization.

❀ Śrī Rāmabhadra ❀

Śrī Rāmabhadra was a dear devotee of Śrī Rāmacandra. Once, as he was staying in one place, observing the vow of *cāturmāsyā*, many people gathered to hear from him. Seeing his popularity, Śrī Rāmabhadra decided to leave that place but the Lord ordered him in a dream to stay and continue preaching the cult of devotional service. However, he did not consider the dream to be significant and so left that place. While going, he came to a river in which there was only a little water. As he was crossing the river, the water level suddenly rose so that he almost drowned. Śrī Rāmabhadra simply remembered the Lord, who then rescued him by grabbing his hand. Thereafter, Śrī Rāmabhadra returned to where he had previously been and began giving spiritual discourses. In this way, he delivered many people and awakened their devotional lives.

❀ Śrī Jagadānanda ❀

Śrī Jagadānanda was a pure devotee of Śrī Rāma. He had no pride of his high birth or education. He constantly associated with saintly persons so that he could serve them.

Once, two devotees came to his place while traveling to various holy places. One of the devotees died and so the other devotee began crying in lamentation. Śrī Jagadānanda explained to him that the other devotee has not died, saying, "He will continue his pilgrimage for one more month and then give up his life and go back to the spiritual world."

After saying this, Śrī Jagadānanda touched the dead devotee, bringing him back to life. He was such a greatly exalted personality. In this way, he removed many impediments to in worshiping the Lord, and he instructed whoever he met.

❀ Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī ❀

There lived a learned *brāhmaṇa* named Pramodana Purandara in the village of Koṭālapāḍā in the district of Faridpur in Bengal during the sixteenth century. The name of his third son was Śrī Kamala Nayana. He studied logic from Śrī Harīrāma Tarka Vāgiśa of Navadvīpa, along with Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa. Then he went to Kāśī and studied Vedānta at Śrī Viśveśvara Āśrama and accepted *sannyāsa*. From that time on, he was named Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. He was very expert in scriptural debates and defeated many scholars.

One day, a *paramahansa svāmījī* said to him, "O Svāmījī, one becomes proud after defeating a learned scholar, and the defeated scholar feels humiliated. Name and

fame only pertains to the material body, and the body is temporary. The desire for name and fame is an illusion related to the body. Therefore you should take shelter of Śrī Kṛṣṇa so that you will relish real happiness.”

After receiving these instructions, Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī took shelter of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and accepted Kṛṣṇa *mantras* and lessons from the *paramahansa*. After some time, he left Kāśī and began roaming around the country. He again met the *paramahansa* near Kapiladhārā. The *paramahansa* said, “It takes many, many lifetimes of hard labor before one can have the *darśana* of the Supreme Lord. Have patience and you will one day attain the perfection of life.”

Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī wrote many books, including *Advaita-siddhī*, *Siddhānta-vindu*, *Vedānta-kalpa-latikā*, and *Advaita-ratna-rakṣaṇa*. Later on, he also wrote *Bhakti-rasāyana*, a commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā*, and a commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

❁ Śrī Prabodhānāda ❁

Śrī Prabodhānāda was an exalted devotee of the Lord and a dear servant of Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu. He relished the pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the groves of Vṛndāvana and described them in his books. His eyes were always thirsty to drink the nectar of the beauty of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the *mādhurya-rasa*. He wrote many books, such as *Śrī Vṛndāvana-mahimāmṛta*, in which he revealed the joy of residing in

Vṛndāvana-dhāma. He made the mellows of Vraja easily accessible to the devotees of the Lord. He completely rejected the the practice of fruitive activities, the cultivation of knowledge, and the practice of mystic yoga. Śrī Prabodhānāda was attached to living in Vṛndāvana and he dedicated his body, mind, and everything else for the Lord’s service.

❁ Additional Commentary ❁

Śrī Prabodhānāda Sarasvatī was born in a high-class *brāhmaṇa* family in South India. His forefathers were Vaiṣṇavas of the Śrī *saṁpradāya*. Being impressed by Rāṅgakṣetra the family moved to a village known as Velaṅgūrī on the shore of the Kāverī River. His elder brother was Śrī Venkaṭa Bhaṭṭa, and he had another brother named Trimalla Bhaṭṭa. While traveling to the holy places in South India, Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu arrived at Śrī Rāṅgama. Śrī Venkaṭa Bhaṭṭa invited the Lord to spend the four months of *cāturmāsya* in his house. The entire Bhaṭṭa family became elevated devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa by the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa was the son of Śrī Venkaṭa Bhaṭṭa. Śrī Prabodhānāda was very intelligent from his childhood. At an early age, he studied many scriptures and became a learned scholar. As he was detached from worldly life, he accepted the renounced order of life and spent the rest of his life spreading the cult of devotional service and compiling devotional literatures.

In the year 1571, Śrī Prabodhānanada went to Vṛndāvana, where he met Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī, Śrī Bhugarbha Gosvāmī, Śrī Rupa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs, and many more great souls. He was very pleased to see his nephew, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.

Śrī Prabodhānanada Sarasvatījī wrote a book in glorifying Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu entitled Śrī Caitanya-candrāmṛta. He was Tungavidyā *gopī* in Kṛṣṇa-līlā.

❀ Text 182 ❀

❀ Śrī Dvārakā Dāsa ❀

Śrī Dvārakā Dāsa resided in the village of Cūkas and performed his meditation and worship of the Lord after entering into the water of a river. He had strong attachment for the lotus feet of Śrī Rāmacandra. He took a vow to worship the Lord throughout his entire life. He was completely detached from his wife, children, house, and wealth. Although the bondage of illusion is very difficult to destroy, he easily broke that bondage by utilizing his intelligence. By the mercy of his spiritual master, Śrī Kīlhadēvācārya, and by the strength of his worship of the Lord, he destroyed his illusions by the sharp sword of transcendental knowledge. He left his body in the water of the river by the strength of his practice of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* and attained the supreme abode of the Lord. This was well-known to all the people in his locality.

❀ Text 183 ❀

❀ Śrī Pūrṇa ❀

Śrī Pūrṇa's glories are without limit and so nobody can describe them fully. He resided in a mountain cave near the best of rivers that flowed between two great mountains—Udayācala and Asthācala. He practiced mystic yoga and, having firm faith in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he attained *samādhi*. He was never afraid of wild animals, even the tigers and lions that would roar at him while he meditated in the forest. He controlled his breathing and elevated his life air to his head. He composed many verses glorifying the path of liberation. In this way, Śrī Pūrṇa's glories are impossible to fully describe.

❀ Text 184 ❀

❀ Śrī Lakṣmaṇa Bhaṭṭa ❀

Śrī Lakṣmaṇa Bhaṭṭa performed worship and service to the Supreme Lord according to the methods prescribed in the Rāmānuja *sampradāya*. He strictly observed the prescribed etiquette and accepted the life of a sage. He spent his entire life engaged in the service of the Lord. He was a celebrated devotee of the Lord and had great affection for the Lord's devotees. He practiced all of the nine kinds of devotional service. He

was self-satisfied and very well-behaved. He had no selfish motives as he engaged in the Lord's devotional service and instructed others to follow his example. He recited Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and taught everyone how to discriminate between what should be done and what should be avoided. Śrī Lakṣmaṇa Bhaṭṭa gave up all attachment to the temporary and accepted that which is eternal, just as a swan separates milk from a mixture of milk and water.

❀ Text 185 ❀

❀ Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Payahārī ❀

The great saint, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Payahārī, resided at Galtā near Jaipur. He was endowed with all the godly qualities. He strictly followed all the rules and regulations prescribed in the scriptures. He was an example of one who was transcendently moral. After sage Dadhici, Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Payahārī appeared in Kali-yuga and conquered the contamination of that sinful age.

Once, as he was performing his *bhajana* in a mountain cave, a lion came to there. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Payahārī received the lion as a guest and served it by offering his own flesh. In this way, he became very famous as a magnanimous host.

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Payahārī displayed the limit of detachment and never touched any

money or women throughout his entire life. He was always blissful in the mood of serving the lotus feet of Śrī Rāmacandra, just as a bumblebee becomes intoxicated by the sweet honey from a flower.

Once, as Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Payahārī was performing his *bhajana* in a cave, a lion came there. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Payahārī thought, "Today my Lord has come in the form of a guest." He cut flesh from his thigh and offered it to the lion while praying, "My Lord, kindly accept this."

Religious principles are certainly glorious, but to strictly follow them is certainly difficult for a conditioned soul. Seeing his faith in religious principles, Lord Śrī Rāmacandra was anxious to award him His *darśana*.

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Payahārījī was a genuine saint and his mood was completely honest. When he saw Lord Rāmacandra, the pain he felt from cutting his thigh disappeared. People in this world feel pain when they offer a little food and water to a guest. Considering this, who can compare with Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Payahārī as a giver of charity? By hearing of his character and activities, people were certainly astonished.

❀ Text 186 ❀

❀ Śrī Gadādhara dāsa ❀

Śrī Gadādhara dāsa was always enthusiastic while cultivating devotional service to the

Lord so that he never became complacent. He chanted the holy names of Śrī Bihārī Lālaṅ and remained joyful throughout the entire day and night. He had spontaneous love and attachment for the service of the Lord and His devotees so that he always appeared ecstatic. He was very fond of the devotees, and everyone appreciated the way in which he served them. He was a magnanimous personality who constantly chanted the glories of the Lord. He had firm faith in the Lord and completely dependent upon His mercy so that he never expected anything in return for his service.

❀ **Text 187** ❀

❀ **Śrī Nārāyaṇa dāsa** ❀

Śrī Nārāyaṇa dāsa displayed the limit of worshiping the Supreme Lord because his heart was always filled with sublime mellows of devotional service. He kept his body healthy so that he could use it in the service of the Lord throughout his entire life. He meditated on the beautiful form of Śrī Gopāla in his heart and thus received boundless pleasure. He engaged his tongue in describing the glories of Lord Śyāmasundara, who always reciprocated his service attitude. He helped everyone in their endeavors to serve the Lord. He was a very learned personality who took pleasure in explaining the science of the Absolute Truth to others. It appeared that Lord Nārāyaṇa

had incarnated for the welfare of the people of this world. Śrī Nārāyaṇa dāsa rendered service to the saintly persons with love and devotion whenever the opportunity arose. He imparted instructions to the people of Uttarākhaṇḍa and Uttar Pradesh, thus delivering them from their materialistic way of life.

❀ **Text 188** ❀

❀ **Śrī Bhagavāna dāsa** ❀

Śrī Bhagavāna dāsa was enriched with a strong devotional mentality. He was the well-wisher of everyone, exceedingly well-behaved, pious, and a *rasika* devotee. He was always absorbed in the service and worship of the Lord. His heart was filled with the glories of the Lord, who is the reservoir of all transcendental qualities. He studied Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and understood its actual message and mystery. He resided at Mathurā and always endeavored to serve saintly persons. He was a servant and benefactor of Srimān Khoṅi and Śyāma dāsa. He was a grave personality with steady intelligence and a loving devotee of the Lord.

❀ **Text 189** ❀

❀ **Śrī Kalyāṇa** ❀

To support the devotees when there was opposition and to behave with them in a liberal manner were the two principles Śrī Kalyāṇa observed throughout his life. He was a devotee of Lord Jagannātha and was expert in serving the Lord, who really enjoyed his service. Indeed, the Lord treated him as one of His associates and called him back to His eternal abode. He gave up his wife, children, wealth, and even his life as if they were straw in the street and fixed his love and devotion at the lotus feet Rāmacandra. At the time of giving up his material body, Śrī Kalyāṇa meditated on the beautiful form of Śrī Rāma and chanted the holy names of Śrī Sitā-Rāma, thus attaining life's ultimate goal.

❀ **Text 190** ❀

❀ **Śrī Santa dāsa and Śrī Mādhava dāsa** ❀

O devotees of the Lord, hear now about the two brothers, Śrī Santa dāsa and Śrī Mādhava dāsa. They were brothers of Śrī Sobhurāma Devācārya. Considering this material world to be dry and useless, Śrī Santa dāsa easily gave up all attachment to it. He was fixed in the prescribed codes of conduct and kept himself in the mode of

goodness. He was a glorious devotee and experienced in the science of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He was well-versed in the truth about devotional service, and after careful consideration, he adopted the life of a devotee. His brother, Śrī Mādhava dāsa displayed many miracles by the power of his *bhajana*. He argued with non-devotee *yogīs* and to show his superiority, he threw his cloth into the fire and then took it out without it being burnt. Śrī Santa dāsa and Śrī Mādhava dāsa appeared in this world simply to preach and propagate the devotion service of the Lord. No one could match the service these two brothers accomplished in their lives.

❀ **Text 191** ❀

❀ **Śrī Kānhara Dāsa** ❀

Śrī Kānhara Dāsa was a resident of Buḍiyā village and always took pleasure in the self. He was supremely merciful and the seer of the scriptures' purport and the future. He was like a pillar of devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Kānhara Dāsa was born in a *brāhmaṇa* family and was forgiving, grave, and endowed with all godly qualities. He treated the devotees as being on a level with the Lord and thus he was very affectionate to them. He served the devotees by offering them cloth, foodstuffs, and other gifts. His

intentions were always honest. Having received the mercy of his spiritual master, Śrī Sobhurāma, Śrī Kānhara Dāsa showered his mercy upon all living entities.

❀ Text 192 ❀

❀ Śrī Govinda dāsa Bhaktamālī ❀

Śrī Govinda dāsa Bhaktamālī possessed the treasure of jewel-like *Bhaktamāla* and memorized the entire book. He had a natural attraction for Lord Rāmacandra, whose complexion was the color of a dark raincloud. He was like an ocean of purified intelligence. He had great affection for all kinds of devotees and was expert in describing their characters. He perfectly recited the descriptions of all the devotees mentioned in *Bhaktamāla*. He had firm faith in the devotees, as well as in the Supreme Lord, who is present everywhere by His energies. He was fond of describing the miracles preformed by devotees, and also fond of describing their sublime characters. Knowing his firm faith and devotion to his spiritual master, to the devotees, and to the Supreme Lord, the author, Śrī Nābhā, gave him the title of Bhaktaratnamāla. He was the best and original speaker of Śrī Bhaktamāla and was well-known by the name Bhaktamālī.

❀ Text 193 ❀

❀ Śrī Jagata Singh ❀

Śrī Jagata Singh was the son of Vāsodeva. He pleased the Supreme Lord, the master of the devotees. He also satisfied the greatest of devotees, Lord Śiva. Among all kings, he was the best in engaging in the process of devotional service. He had firm faith and trust in his devotional practice. By his genuine love and devotion, as well as his humble nature, he conquered Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārayaṇa. His fame destroyed the sinful reactions and faults of Kali-yuga. His order was irreversible. There was no warrior of his time who could disregard his order. Seeing his heroism and prowess on the battlefield, all opposing warriors were pleased to fight with him with great enthusiasm. His sunlike arms were powerful, and with those arms he destroyed the fear of darkness (ignorance) within this world.

❀ Text 194 ❀

❀ Śrī Girīdhara Gvāla ❀

Śrī Girīdhara Gvālājī was a friend and companion of Gopāla Kṛṣṇa. He was an exalted and loving devotee. Whenever he sang about the transcendental qualities of the Lord, his voice choked due to love revealed his devotional mood. He would dance in

ecstasy in the forest of Vṛṇḍāvana and forget all about himself, his clothing, and his ornaments. In such a situation, if anyone came near him, he would give that person his ornaments and opulent dress. Once, for the benefit of the devotees, he arranged a grand *rāsa-līla* performance in Mālapurā village near Jaipur. In that performance, all the assembled people became overcome by transcendental joy and thus became devoted to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

❀ **Text 195** ❀

❀ **Śrī Gopālī** ❀

It appears that mother Yaśodā personally appeared in this world as Śrī Gopālī in order to nourish and maintain all the devotees with motherly affection. Her entire body was saturated with love of God. She would daily render service to her Lord, Śrī Mohanalāla. The faults and contaminations of Kali could not touch her body and mind. She never harbored any duplicity in her heart in her dealings with anyone. Śrī Gopālī's words were very sweet and pleasing to hear. She continuously chanted the holy name of Śrī Govinda. She had all the godly qualities and symptoms of a stalwart devotee and chaste woman. By nature, she was very grave. Her faith and devotion for saintly persons was legendary. The heart of Śrī Gopālī was absolutely pure. She rendered devotional service in the mood of *vātsalya-rasa*.

❀ **Text 196** ❀

❀ **Śrī Rāmadāsa** ❀

Śrī Rāmadāsa served the devotees of the Lord with a heart filled with affection. His words were soothing, soft, and humble. Just as a lotus flower blooms when the sun rises, Śrī Rāmadāsa experienced joy as soon as he saw a devotee. With great enthusiasm and taste he rendered various services to saintly persons. He would wash the devotees' feet and sprinkle the water over his head. He would offer obeisances to the devotees by falling flat onto the ground. He would cook and then feed the devotees many delicious foodstuffs. His place of residence was in Bacchavana. He had firm faith in the Lord and kept His lotus feet continuously within his heart.

❀ **Text 197** ❀

❀ **Śrī Rāmarāya** ❀

Śrī Rāmarāya was born in a Sārasvata *brāhmaṇa* family, and he engaged in the loving service of the Supreme Lord. He was absorbed in the cultivation of transcendental knowledge, detachment, and devotional service to the Lord. He was freed from lust, anger, false ego, greed, illusion, envy, and other material faults. He remained engaged in glorifying the Lord and thus he

felt great ecstasy within his heart. He would become pleased simply by seeing or meeting devotees, just as a lotus blossoms at sunrise. Those sinful people who were envious of him and who tried to humiliate him were defeated by the will of Providence so that their heads bent down with shame.

❀ **Text 198** ❀

❀ **Śrī Bhagavanta Mudita** ❀

Śrī Bhagavanta Mudita was the son of Śrī Mādhava dāsa. He was decorated with *tilaka* and a *tulasī kaṇṭhī-mālā*, and was approved by the devotees, and so he daily engaged in the service of his worshipable Lord, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. He described the spotless fame of the Lord and relished doing so. The intimate pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa were manifest in his heart. He was on the topmost platform of devotional service, rendering service to the Lord in pure ecstatic love without deviation. He rejected worldly and Vedic rules and regulations which were opposed to pure devotional service. His heart was simply attached to the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

❀ **Text 199** ❀

❀ **Śrī Lālamatī** ❀

The staunch female devotee, Śrī Lālamatī, had pure love for Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, whose complexions were golden and black, respectively, as well as for the River Yamunā and the groves that are situated on its shore. She had strong affection for Vamśīvaṭa, the dust of Vraja, Gokula, the Vrajavāsīs, the devotees who resided in Vraja, Śrī Mathurā, and Śrī Girirāja Govardhana. This intelligent Śrī Lālamatī resided in Vṛṇḍāvana-dhāma throughout her entire life. She utilized her rarely attained human birth to achieve the rarely attained devotional service to Lord Hari.

❀ **Text 200** ❀

❀ **The Supremacy of devotees** ❀

Once, some greatly intelligent sages gathered for the purpose of ascertaining the identity of the foremost personality so that they could worship Him, and not others. Some of them said that mother earth is the greatest personality because she possesses the quality of tolerance, sustains all kinds of living entities, and is the wife of Lord Viṣṇu. Others said that Ananta Śeṣa is the greatest personality because He carries mother earth on one of His hoods. Another sage said that

Śrī Śaṅkara is the greatest personality because he carries Śeṣa on his head as an ornament. Another sage said that Śiva resides at Kailāśa Mountain and that once, Rāvaṇa picked up Śiva, along with Kailāśa Mountain, and so Rāvaṇa is the greatest personality. Another pointed out that Vāli had defeated Rāvaṇa and then Lord Rāmacandra had killed Vāli, and so He is the greatest personality. Finally, they all concluded that the Supreme Lord, Rāmacandra, is greater than the greatest and thus should be meditated upon within the heart. They concluded that He is the topmost personality within the three worlds. The opinion of Śrī Agradeva is that one should serve the devotees, for they are the greatest of all.

❀ Text 201 ❀

❀ The glories of devotees ❀

Just as the devotees take great pleasure in talking about the Lord, the Lord also takes great pleasure in talking about His loving devotees. The relationship and the reciprocation between the Supreme Lord and the devotees are eternal, and thus present during all the four yugas. The Lord and the devotees are perfect and pure and they are non-different from one another. The Supreme Lord has glorified His devotees again and again, for He is attached to them. This is well-known throughout the entire world.

After completing His exile, when Lord Rāmacandra returned to Ayodhyā, He took pleasure in describing the glorious activities of His devotees and followers. Śrī Agradevācāraya says that from this evidence, it is concluded that simply by describing the godly qualities of the devotees, Śrī Rāmacandra, the husband of Sītā, becomes controlled by them.

❀ Text 202 ❀

❀ The exalted position of the devotees ❀

One should not be surprised while reading the description of the devotees' glories found in this book, *Bhaktamāla*, or in any other historical literature or *Purāṇa*. The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, said to the sage, Durvāsā, "I am under the control of My devotees."

The classic examples of the devotees' glorious positions being held in high esteem are found in the stories of Dhruva Mahārāja, Gajendra, Prahlāda Mahārāja, and Lord Rāmacandra's eating berries offered by Sabarī.

In the Rājasūya sacrifice conducted by Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, Śrī Kṛṣṇa personally washed the feet of the saintly persons and *brāhmaṇas* who attended, and also collected their plates after they had eaten. He repeatedly gave protection from great dangers to the Pāṇḍavas. The devotee,

Candrahāsa, was given poison by sinful people, but instead of being killed, he was blessed by the woman, Viṣayā, and by the king who awarded him the power to rule.

Even in this age of Kali, there have been many saintly persons who appeared and displayed their exalted positions. One should give up dry and useless arguments and have faith in the descriptions of the devotees's sublime character and astonishing activities. Only then can one realize the devotees' true position.

❀ Text 203 ❀

Just as by pouring water on the root of a tree, all of its branches, flowers, fruits, and twigs are nourished, so simply by describing the characteristics of the previous ācāryas, all the other devotees are glorified. Considering this, one should not feel that the devotees no included in this book, *Bhaktamāla*, have been slighted.

❀ Text 204 ❀

Who could describe all of the devotees of the Lord who had appeared in this world? Just as a small bird cannot drink an ocean of water, it is not possible for me to describe the lives and characters of all the devotees.

❀ Text 205 ❀

As the Deity forms of the Lord and *tulasī* leaves, whether big or small, possess the same glories, so a Vaiṣṇava, whether from a low-class family or a high-class family, is the possessor of all godly qualities and glories. That some devotees were described earlier and others later does not indicate superiority or inferiority. If you find any devotee described later whom you feel should have been written about earlier then, dear reader, kindly forgive the offence of this servant.

❀ Text 206 ❀

Just as fruits are more attractive when they are attached to the tree, and just as from a seed of the fruit one attains another tree, so by describing the glories and achievements of the spiritual masters, the glories of their disciples and servants are enhanced, and vice versa. There is nothing astonishing about this.

Text 207

May I smear over my head the dust from the lotus feet of all the devotees who appeared in the four yugas and who will also appear in the future? That would be the greatest treasure of my life.

❀ Text 208 ❀

By glorifying the characteristics and accomplishments of the devotees of the Lord, one becomes famous and attains all other benefits of this world. The three kinds of material miseries can no longer trouble such a person. Moreover, the Lord eternally resides within his heart.

❀ Text 209 ❀

After hearing about the glories of the devotees of Lord Hari, if someone finds fault with them, that person will suffer from stomach diseases in this life, and his next life will be in vain.

❀ Text 210 ❀

If you wish to attain shelter at the lotus feet of the Lord then simply glorify His devotees. If you do so without offense, you will receive shelter in the Lord without a doubt. Otherwise, if you avoid glorifying the devotees, all of your pious activities performed during many, many lifetimes will be as useless as dried seeds. There will be no benefit from such piety, and one will have to lament, birth after birth.

❀ Text 211 ❀

A devotee who collects descriptions of the devotees' glorious qualities and activities, who explains these, or who hears about them and approves of these talk will become as dear to the Lord as if he were His son. The Lord takes such devotees and places them on His lap.

❀ Text 212 ❀

If a devotee of the Lord becomes attached to speaking about and hearing the glories of the devotees, he certainly becomes a shareholder of the piety earned by those devotees.

❀ Text 213 ❀

Following in the footsteps of those devotees who have described the glories of those great souls, and honoring the remnants of their food, I have compiled this literature, *Bhaktamāla*, to the best of my capacity and intelligence, just as a person may collect grains scattered in the field.

❀ Text 214 ❀

Some people depend upon bodily strength,

mystic yoga, performances of sacrifice, and so on, thinking that they will be benefited by such activities. Some people depend on their high birth and pure actions and think that these will enable them to be delivered from the ocean of material existence. As far as I am concerned, such performances are not within my capacity and so I do not depend upon them. The desire of this Nārāyaṇa dāsa is this—may the names, qualities, and activities of my spiritual master and all the other devotees of the Lord remain present within my heart.

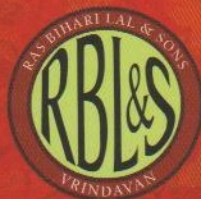
End of Śrī Bhaktamāla



There was conflict due to disagreements between the different sampradāyas at the time Bhaktamāla was compiled. Everyone thought their worshipable Deity, their literatures, their ācāryas, and their followers to be the best and therefore all the others inferior. For this reason the practice of real religion had suffered, and is still suffering.

In such a time of crisis, Śrīmad Agvadevācārya instructed Śrī Nābhā about the unalloyed conclusion that by worshiping the devotees of the Supreme Lord and by following the orders of a bonafide spiritual master, one's goal of life is easily achieved. This conclusion is not sectarian or biased because it establishes the absolute and transcendental position of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His pleenary portions, His devotees, His devotional service, and His representatives.

Simply by chanting, reading, or hearing the contents of this book, one will become like one of the beads on this string. The beads, the head bead, the act of stringing the beads, and the thread are four different objects, but when strung, they become one. The devotee, devotional service, the Supreme Lord, and the spiritual master—by worshiping any one of these with faith and determination, one easily avails of the other three.



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